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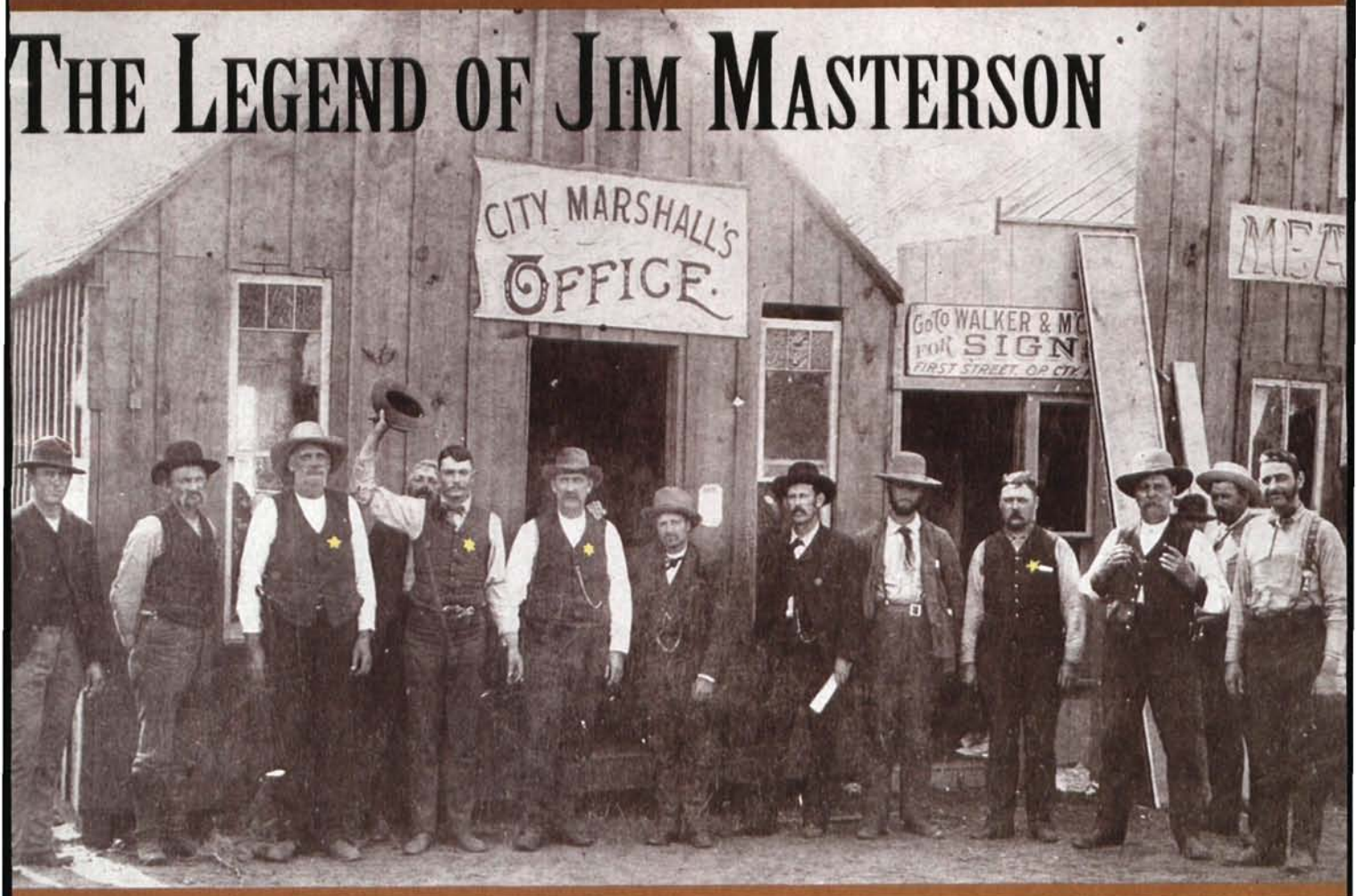

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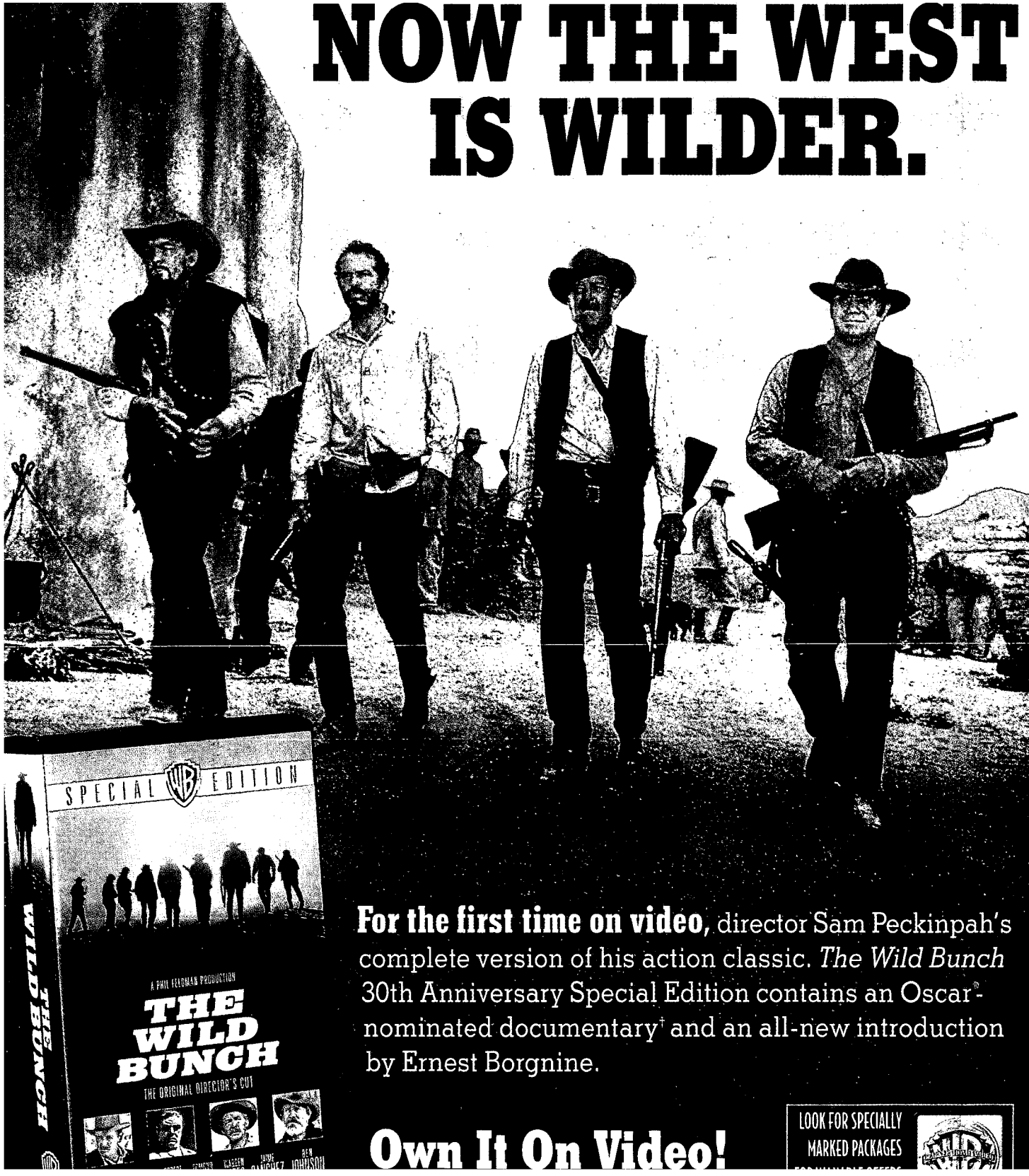

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TRUE WEST

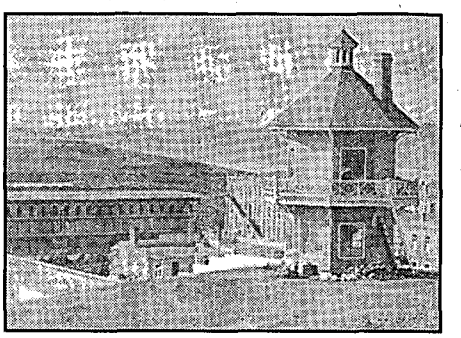
March 1999
Vol. 46, No. 3
Whole No. 371

Our Cover
Guthrie Lawmen
Courtesy Robert Cunningham
see related story, page 31.

FEATURES

12 **A Highland Fling: Fox Ramsay and the All-Alaska Sweepstakes Race.** *By Karen Holliday Tanner and John D. Tanner, Jr.* An Englishman tests his meddle in a 408-mile sled dog race, with a winner-takes-all purse of $10,000.

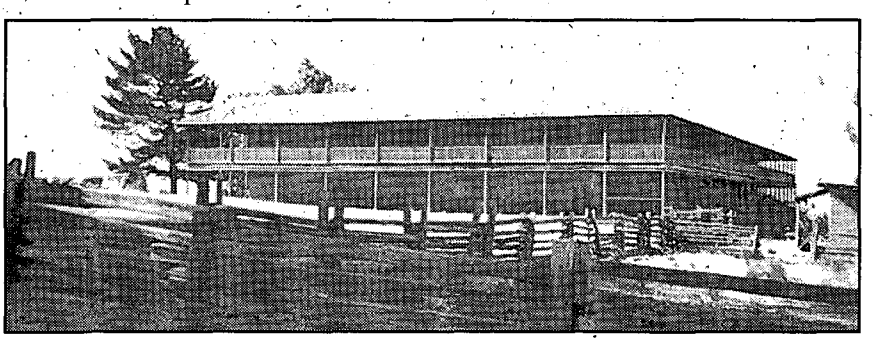
18 **Escape from San Quentin: Part I.** *By William B. Secrest.* A hell for California's early criminal element, San Quentin became a popular place to get away from, one way or another.



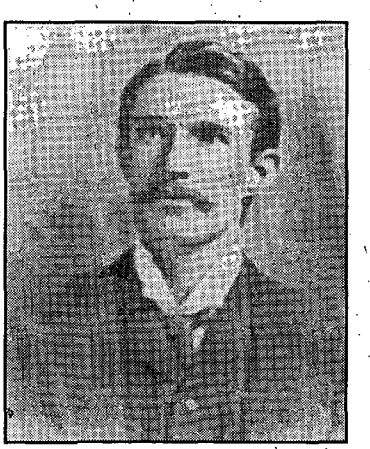
25 **John Shanssey: From Prize Ring to Politics.** *By R.K. DeArment.* Irish pugilist John Shanssey practices his fancy footwork in the boxing ring, the gambling den, and the political arena.

31 ***True West* Legends: Jim Masterson.** *By R.K. DeArment.* The life and times of "Bat's little brother," a highly respected peace officer and capable man-with-a-gun.

38 **Petaluma's Casa Grande.** *By Richard H. Dillon.* California Governor José Figueroa enlists Mariano Vallejo to build a defensive *rancho* against Russian expansion in *Frontera del Norte.*



44 **A Million Words Down the Trail: J. Marvin Hunter, Pioneer Printer.** *By Dot Ferguson Hatfield.* People were drawn to tell Marvin Hunter their stories and to give him their family relics for display in his Frontier Times Museum.



Departments

3 FROM THE EDITOR
4 TRULY WESTERN
8 ROUNDUP
52 REVIEWS
54 ANSWER MAN
58 WILD OLD DAYS
62 CROSSWORD

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From the Editor

Howdy, ya'll!

Western history is in the news again, and soon it will be jingling in our collective pocket. This past June, Secretary of the United States Treasury Robert Rubin announced that the Dollar Coin Advisory Committee had decided on a new design to replace the Susan B. Anthony Dollar.

Among the six design finalists, including Harriet Tubman and Eleanor Roosevelt, the committee decided that Lewis and Clark expedition member Sacajawea will grace the new currency.

In December the U.S. Treasury unveiled six proposed designs for the coin, all depicting the sixteen-year-old Shoshone (some historians argue Sacajawea was actually Hidatsa) as she may have looked at the time of the 1804 expedition. The majority of the designs feature the young woman with her child, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, strapped to her back, a fact that focuses not only on her role in the journey, but also as mother and protector. Virtually unknown in her own time, Sacajawea quickly became a vital player in the drama of Meriwether Lewis' and William Clark's Corps of Discovery.

Sacajawea's role in history began, perhaps, when she was wagered, then won and married by French Canadian trader Toussaint Charbonneau. Initially hired to accompany Lewis and Clark as an interpreter, the boorish Charbonneau took a backseat to his wife when her skills with the Shoshone procured valuable and much-needed horses for the crossing of the Rockies.

Sacajawea's role on the journey did not diminish, but never fully reached the guide status that has been bestowed upon her in popular culture. She served more as a "living guide," proving most helpful in determining what could and could not be eaten along the route, and by providing a unique and priceless "Indian" perspective on the geography. Her ability to "read" rivers, valleys, and mountain passes proved invaluable to the group.

Sacajawea certainly deserves all the credit bestowed upon her, if not for her role in the expedition, then for the fact that she made the trip from North Dakota to the Pacific and back to Missouri with an infant in her care. The logistics of such a feat alone are astounding, but the combination of mother and child had an entirely different affect on the journey. Native American historian William Least Heat-Moon, in a recent interview with Public Broadcasting System, expressed that Sacajawea became a "living white flag" for the expedition. After all, a woman with a child strapped to her back, leading a group of white men across the wilderness, hardly gave the impression of a war party. "She was a sign of peace, better than anything they could have found."

Most recently, the role of Sacajawea, and the expedition as a whole, has received quite a bit of attention. In the past few years, Stephen Ambrose published a best-selling chronicle of the journey, and documentary filmmaker Ken Burns presented the story to a wide television audience on PBS. The Dollar Coin Advisory Committee's decision may have been swayed by this, although the choice is quite obvious to anyone with previous knowledge of the Lewis and Clark, and by association, Sacajawea story.

The U.S. Mint estimates the new dollar, gold in color and easily distinguished from the quarter, will be released when the existing stock of Susan B. Anthony coins is depleted, sometime around January 2000.

So, as Sacajawea led the Corps of Discovery into an uncharted territory, she will once again become a "living white flag," this time leading the U.S. into a new millennium.

Marcus Huff

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BRUSHY BILLY DEBATE BRISTLES

We were extremely pleased that letter writer Chris Roberts accepted our invitation to debate the findings in our book *The Return of the Outlaw Billy the Kid* ("Truly Western," *True West*, November 1998). We looked forward to some enlightened and sophisticated discussion relative to the quest for truth as it regards Billy the Kid.

Our pleasure turned to disappointment, however, when Roberts devoted over half of his communication merely to the authors' earlier response to a review by a gentleman [*True West*, April 1998] who had apparently not read or clearly did not understand the book. We sincerely hope Roberts will challenge us to provide evidence for the previous statement.

In his criticism, Roberts admitted he knew of "no serious scholar that has embraced [the] book as historically sound." The truth is, since *The Return of the Outlaw Billy the Kid* was released in late 1997, the research, the analysis, and the findings have been presented on numerous occasions to scholars, newspaper reporters, policemen, private investigators, judges, and lawyers, sometimes individually, but more often in formal lectures and presentations. In each case, the research and analytical techniques reported in the book have, in fact, been "embraced," and even lauded, by such folks. Former Texas State Attorney General Waggoner Carr saw fit to write and tell us he "was impressed with the research...and the fairness in the way it was presented." In his great book, *Legends and Lies*, scholar and author Dale L. Walker referred to the notion that our "startling scientific findings renewed the argument on whether or not...Roberts and Billy the Kid were one."

Based on his statements, it is apparent Mr. Roberts is unclear as to what exactly a scholar is, perhaps confusing them with the outlaw buffs and hobbyists with whom he is familiar. During the early writing phases of *The Return of the Outlaw Billy the Kid*, the authors attempted to work with several of those "scholars" but found their so-called scholarship did not go beyond merely collecting and repeating information already published. We also found them to be unjustifiably resistant to any proposition that might represent a departure from the traditional treatments of Billy the Kid history. Their resistance was expressed in spite of the fact that not a single one of them examined our drafts or data, something no serious researcher or scholar would ever be guilty of.

There is a long-standing tradition in professional research and historical study that the search for truth should be honored, a tradition clearly violated by these gentlemen.

Roberts further criticized the notion that advertisements for the book carried no national review. Clearly, the publisher is responsible for such advertisements and the authors have little or no input into such things. We do maintain, however, a folder chock full of pertinent reviews and references Mr. Roberts is welcome to examine.

When Roberts finally attempts to be specific about *The Return of the Outlaw Billy the Kid* in the final three-and-a-half column inches of his letter, he stated the authors

SADDLE PALS **By Graham Ward**

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"relate a mere nine pages to the life and death of Billy the Kid." Such a remarkable statement causes us to wonder if Roberts, like the aforementioned reviewer, actually read the book, for the 240 pages fairly explode with references to the "life and death of Billy the Kid."

Roberts' brief analysis of related works as well as the FBI and University of Texas photo-comparison study is absurd and reveals he knows little or nothing of such things.

The truth is, as of this writing the authors of *The Return of the Outlaw Billy the Kid* have received dozens of letters and calls of praise for the book, along with offers to write more books, as well as uncountable invitations to speak on the research and analysis presented in this book. To our knowledge, there have only been two published negative responses, the qualifications and credentials of each remaining suspect.

In Roberts' closing statement, he said he found himself questioning why *The Return of the Outlaw Billy the Kid* was written in the first place. The answer is perfectly clear to any serious and qualified historian, but perhaps multi-award winning author and noted book reviewer Walker stated it best in a March 29, 1998, *Rocky Mountain News* review when he wrote, "This is historical detective work of a high order and a thoroughly fascinating book."

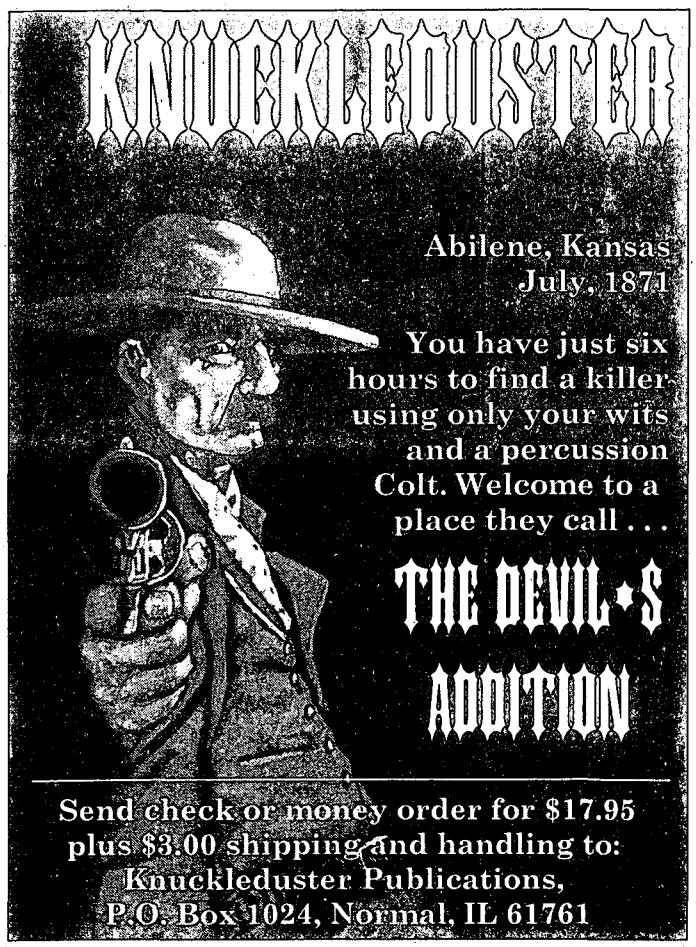
We have enjoyed a number of pleasant telephone conversations with Mr. Roberts and find him to be an affable gentleman with an obvious passion for Billy the Kid history. Having a passion for history, however, is not the same as possessing the all-so-important credentials and credibility necessary for substantive criticism and contribution. Mr. Roberts, by his own admission, is a relative newcomer in this field, and in time we trust he can earn a measure of credibility. Until then, we continue to look forward to a serious and substantive debate relative to the findings in *The Return of the Outlaw Billy the Kid.*—*W.C. Jameson and Frederick Bean, Conway, Arkansas.*

Repo Horse

In my first scan through the January 1999 issue of *True West*, I stopped long enough to read the short article on Comanche, "Myles Keogh's Horse," one of my favorite western history subjects. In the article I noted one small error. Comanche's remains were not "donated" to the University of Kansas. Actually KU took possession of the horse more or less by "default."

When Comanche died, a contingent of officers from Fort Riley, Kansas, commissioned Professor Dyche, a well-known naturalist and taxidermist at KU, to preserve the remains for an agreed upon fee.

When the mount was completed, payment was not forthcoming from Fort Riley and Comanche was placed in storage until the Chicago World's Fair. Upon return from the fair, the university took possession of the horse on the basis of non-payment of services rendered.—*Ivan L.*



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Shotgun Collins

To add one detail to Chuck Parson's excellent treatment on "Shotgun" Collins in his January 1999 "Answer Man" column, one reason for the light documentation on his career may have to do with the Arizona-to-Kansas trajectory usually followed by researchers. One 1883 newspaper story, while referencing Collins only briefly, stated that he "was a Wells, Fargo & Co. messenger" who "obtained his name from the peculiar weapon he used, a sawed off shot gun." A May 15, 1883, *Kansas City Journal* story adds: "He has killed two men in Montana and two in Arizona, but beyond that his exploits are not known...." Indeed. But the mere fact of Collins' inclusion in an article mentioning the likes of Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, Luke Short, Bat Masterson, and Joe Lowe, certainly gives us some indication of the esteem in which he was held, if only in that time and in those circles.—*Timothy W. Fattig, Couch, Missouri.*

Raids in the 1930s

Just finished reading "The Search for the Apache Kid's Daughter" (*True West,* January 1999) and was delighted to learn of isolated Apache raids into the 1930s along the U.S.-Mexican border. You should be complimented in publishing this fine story by Lynda A. Sanchéz.

A *True West* editor once returned one of my articles stating that the action took place in a too recent "time frame." 1915? To me, this makes it more interesting to have some events be carried over into another century—1900, I mean, don't know about 2000.—*Art Shoemaker, Hominy, Oklahoma.*

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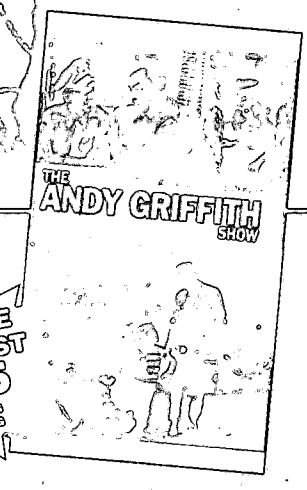

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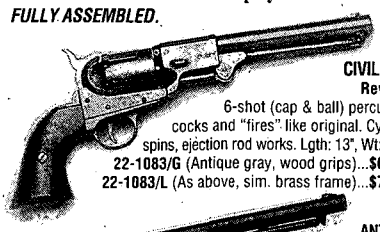

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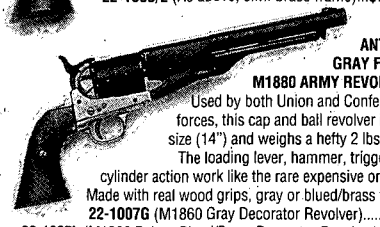

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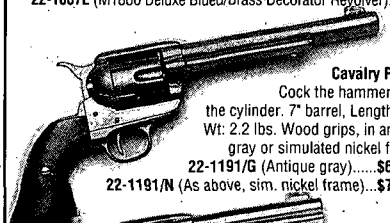

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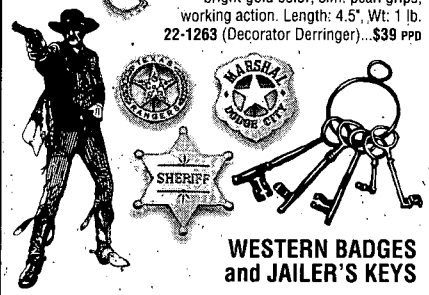

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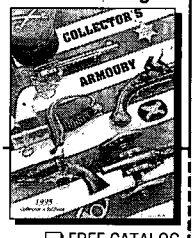

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ROUNDUP

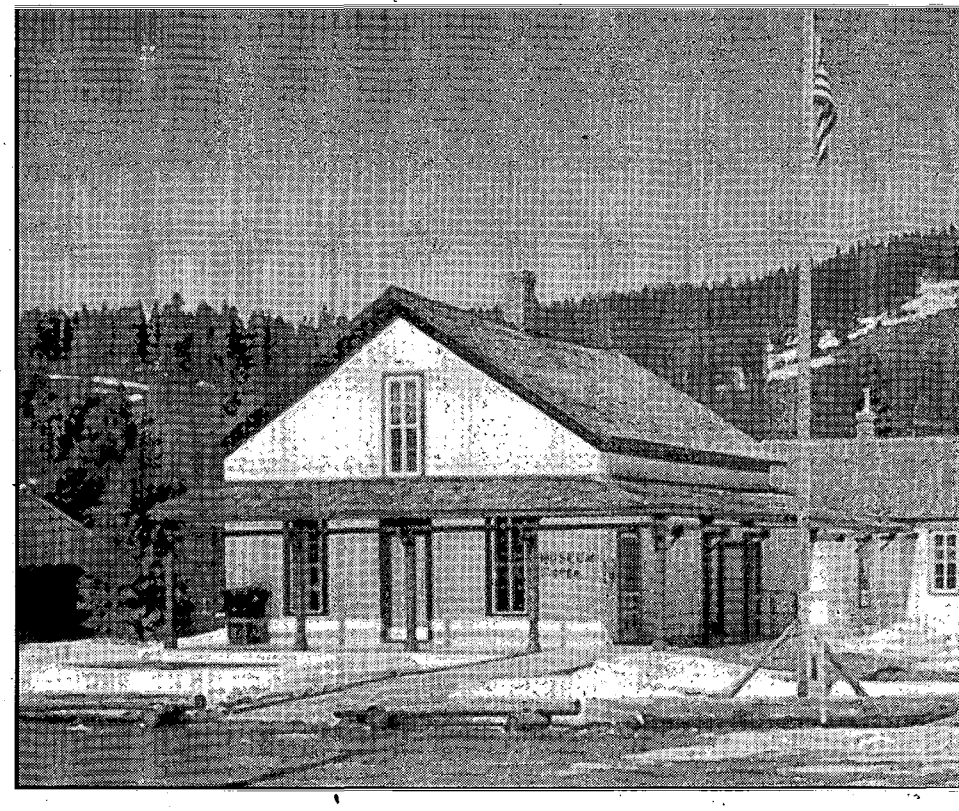
THE COZENS RANCH MUSEUM

BY RANDY D. SMITH

Outside income was often the key to survival during settlement of the West. William Cozens' ranch house, post office, and stagecoach station, near Frazer, Colorado, stands as an example of how one early settler managed to prosper in the 1870s.

Like many others of the time, young William Zane Cozens was drawn to Colorado during the Colorado Gold Rush of the 1860s. Born in 1830, in upstate New York, Cozens was apprenticed as a carpenter before succumbing to the romance of moving west to make his fortune. Shortly after his arrival in Central City, Colorado, he was appointed sheriff of Gilpin County where he served successfully for several years. He met and married a devout Catholic girl, Mary York, who had been brought to Central City by John H. Gregory, discoverer of the first gold lode in Gilpin County, to establish a laundry and small boarding house.

Mary did not approve of the wide-open mining town as a proper place to raise a family. When William told her of a broad, rich valley in Grand County where he had done some hunting, Mary convinced him that they should sell their interests in Central City and move there. Cozens purchased some property, locally known as the Haystacks for two piles of hay left by the previous owner. Good meadow land was important to establishing a ranch in the high country because cattle had to be fed during the heavy snowfall of the winter. He put up several one-room cabins near a spring and moved his family to the valley in 1874. Soon after the move,



The Cozens Ranch Museum.

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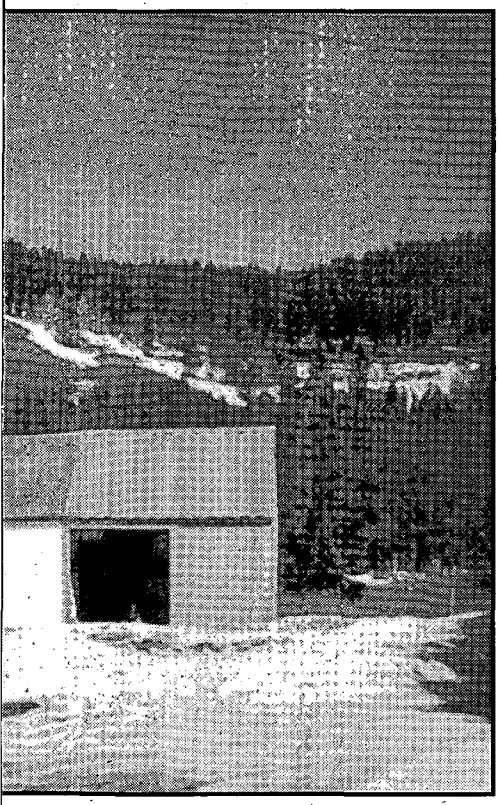
he began construction of the two-story structure that stands today as a museum, open to the general public.

There is a common misconception concerning ranching as the path to riches in the Old West. Although many like to relate the success and riches gained by a few of the large, famous spreads, it is often not mentioned or clearly understood that many of these large ranches were the result of business consortiums investing other people's capital or were established by men who had made fortunes in other enterprises before entering the ranching industry. Then as now, it takes a lot of money and time to establish a profitable ranching herd from scratch. Only a very few operators possessed sufficient resources to begin with a full scale herd, and many of them were wiped out within the first ten years because they did not understand the boom and bust cycle of raising and selling cattle for money. Cozens was not a wealthy man and needed a steady source of income to survive those early years of herd building. Fortunately, passage through the



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valley followed a natural roadway in front of his house, so the house was offered as a hotel from the moment of construction.

Cozens managed to secure an appointment as postmaster of Grand County in 1876 and established a post office within his house. Such an appointment at that time consisted of little more than maintaining a set of postal boxes in a secure environment until locals could come to retrieve their mail. More importantly, the federal government paid good wages for a postmaster position. Family members could monitor the mail as a part of their daily choring activities without being forced to devote all their time.

By 1880, the Cozens Ranch became a regular stage stop on the run of the Georgetown-Middle Park Mail and Transportation Company. This new business demanded far more time and resources but generated significantly more income. Mary Cozens' earlier work at running a boardinghouse in Central City made her experienced at profitably serving meals and managing supplies. William's carpentry training allowed him to build a significant expansion to the house in 1882 to serve as post office and stage station. The hay meadows also allowed for a steady supply of cheap (and profitable) feed for the teams. Day-to-day operations became a family responsibility as daughters Sarah helped with the cooking and Mary Elizabeth filled the seamstress, laundress, and gardener duties. William, the youngest child, helped with haying, choring, and livestock maintenance.

As was typical in the West, Grand County was not served by the commonly depicted Concord style of stagecoach, but rather by the lighter "mud wagon" style, which was smaller and used canvas siding to protect passengers from dirt and weather. A Concord was much too heavy for the long passage over Berthoud Pass into the valley. By the time passengers reached the Cozens Ranch, they were hungry, dirty, and tired. Tickets averaged a rather high price of thirty-five dollars and passengers expected substantial meals as part of their fees. Mary's records indicate that she averaged from six to twelve customers when the stage stopped at the ranch.

To feed such large groups demanded a significant storage, clean up, and serving facility. Cozens built the station addition to the southeast of the main house using a long connecting hall and storeroom off the dining room to act as a post office. The station room was larger than many houses in the valley and sported a substantial, connecting, cold storage room dug into the ground and featuring masonry walls. It held large quantities of potatoes grown on the ranch as well as hanging carcasses of ranch beef and locally hunted elk and venison. Water was hauled by hand from the stream. The stage stop room was not open in winter when the passes were blocked with snow, but guests stopped year-around for Mary's reputable meals. These were served in the smaller, more easily heated, house dining room.

William and Mary Cozens did well with their ventures, and by 1898 the ranch consisted of over seven hundred acres serving hundreds of travelers, including tourists on their way to Hot Sulphur Springs, cattle drovers, and freighters coming over Berthoud Pass. There are no harrowing tales of gunplay, danger, or vast riches connected with the Cozens Ranch. Instead, like the vast majority of businesses in the early West, the ranch was inhabited by and served hard-working pioneers engaged in making a living for themselves and their families.

The only confrontation of note took place when the railroad tried to cross the ranch in 1902. It is told that old William did not want the tracks to cross his hay meadow, so he sat on his porch and shot out the stakes every time the surveyors put them into the ground. Eventually the surveyors relented and moved the stakes back into the trees where the railroad runs today.

The appeal of the homestead to

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modern tourists can be found in the interesting furnishings and equipment within the museum, the representation of an authentic old time stage stop, and a chance to view the hand-hewn wall and floor construction techniques that Cozens used. Restored wallpaper patterns and cut out wall sections demonstrate the appearance and construction of an authentic Old West homestead. The utilitarian stage station area is intriguing, certainly a far cry from a modern motel or an airport terminal.

A family cemetery is located across the river east of the house. The Cozens family is buried there, as is an infant child of a couple who worked for the family one summer. None of Cozens' three children married. William died in 1904 at age seventy-four, and Mary followed four years later at seventy-eight. Daughters Sarah and Mary Elizabeth died in 1923 and 1928 respectively. When son, William, III, died in 1937 at age seventy-six, most of the personal items of the family were given away or sold. The house and property were deeded to the Jesuits, with the understanding that the order would care for whichever of the children lived the longest. William was an educator at Regis College and returned to the ranch with the Jesuits each summer. The building served as the local Catholic chapel until 1979.

Today, the ranch house is maintained by the Grand County Historical Association, and is open year-around. It is maintained by a modest admission fee required of visitors. Tours are largely self-guided, but a representative is present to answer questions. The ranch is a perfect stop for those interested in Old West history who might be touring the area or skiing in nearby Winter Park. William and Mary Cozens probably never imagined that their small inn would continue to serve passers-by into the twenty-first century. For more information, contact the Grand County Historical Association, Box 165, Hot Sulphur Springs, Colorado 80451.

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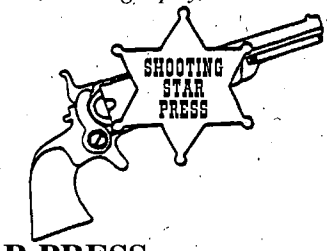

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A HIGHLAND FLING:

By Karen Holliday Tanner and John D. Tanner, Jr.

Alaska Historical Library

Fox Ramsay with his two lead dogs.

Gold! The cry was heard around the world as treasure hunters were lured from strike to strike throughout the arctic frontier. The call beckoned adventurers to Alaska, and many eventually were drawn as far west and north as Nome on the cold, monotonous Bering Sea coast. Here the frigid temperatures froze the sea and isolated Nome from the outside world for eight months of every year. Diversions were needed to counteract the oppressive boredom. Tug of war contests, skiing, and marathon footraces supplied tests of strength and endurance and also created opportunities for wagering the precious yellow element. Boxing proved one of Nome's favorite pastimes, and an impressive list of notables enhanced their careers in Nome. George Lewis "Tex" Rickard promoted fights from his Northern Saloon and later continued his promoting career as manager of New York's Madison Square Garden, where he staged the famous Jack Dempsey-Luis Firpo bout in 1923. Down the street from the Northern was the Dexter Saloon where owner and fortune hunter Wyatt Earp also sponsored and refereed bouts. Many other western notables were enticed to Nome by their desire for wealth.

In the quest for amusement and sport, Nome developed the ultimate gaming event, testing the capabilities and endurance of both man and dogs. The 408-mile All-Alaska Sweepstakes sled dog race,

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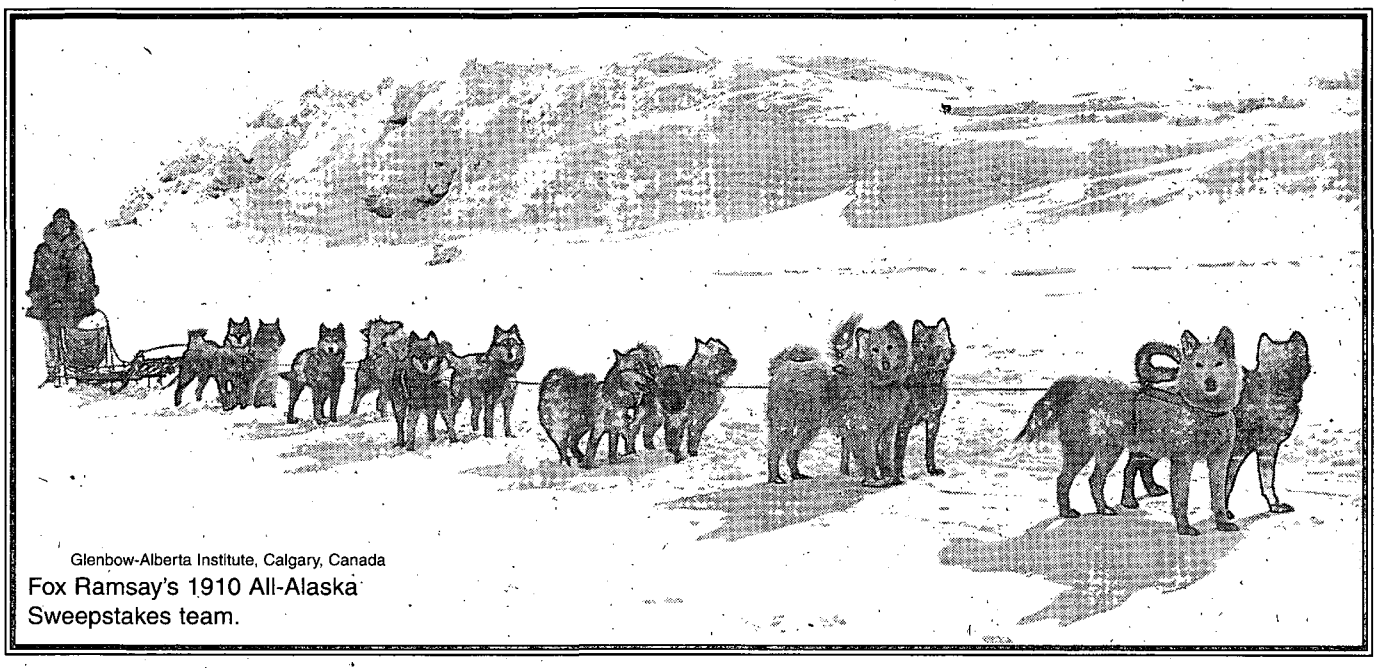
Fox Ramsay and the All-Alaska Sweepstakes Race



Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary, Canada
Fox Ramsay's 1910 All-Alaska Sweepstakes team.

with its $10,000 first prize, was the brainchild of Albert Fink, a prominent Nome attorney, who organized the Nome Kennel Club on February 5, 1908. A young attorney in San Francisco when gold was discovered in Nome, Fink migrated north to the flourishing city where he became a practicing trial lawyer. He later gained notoriety in Chicago for his defense of Al Capone on multiple counts of tax evasion.

Prior to 1908, the Alaska Telephone and Telegraph Company constructed several telephone lines linking much of the Seward Peninsula. The Nome Kennel Club decided that the Sweepstakes Race could be run along the line which ran from Nome east to Candle and then return, the total distance of 408 miles supplying a variety of challenging conditions. Esther Birdsall Darling, Nome's poet laureate, wrote:

> The route varied constantly; from hour to hour; from a narrow passage between the towering ice hummocks of the Bering Sea to wide plains of unbroken snow; from the steep slopes of Topkok hill to the desolate storm-swept wastes of Death Valley; from the pleasant winding road through the wooded Council district to the trackless and treacherous ice on rivers and lakes.

During the ten years in which the famous race was held, entrants were attracted from a myriad of backgrounds. Danish-born Charles Madsen, an arctic trader; A.N. Kittleson, recorder for the Cape Nome Mining District; United States Army captain and former Rough Rider Martin L. Crimmins; hardware store employee and later territorial legislator Alexander "Scotty" Allan; and mining supervisor Viktor Anderson were among those drawn to the grueling event. However, of the sixty-six drivers who took to the Sweepstakes trail between 1908 and 1917, the most unlikely musher of all was the Honorable Charles Fox Maule-Ramsay, known to the locals as Fox.

Fox Ramsay was born on March 5, 1885, at Dalhousie Castle, the last of the five sons born to Lord John William Maule-Ramsay and Lady Ida Louise Bennet-Ramsay, the daughter of Lord Charles Bennet, sixth Earl of Tankerville. Lord Ramsay, the thirteenth Earl of Dalhousie, held one of the largest landed titles in the United Kingdom, with vast estates at Midlothian (near Edinburgh), Scotland. In 1887, Lord and Lady Ramsay were stricken with what was reported to be blood poisoning while at sea returning from an American vacation. Lady Ramsay died on November 24, 1887, and Lord Ramsay, then Secretary for Scotland in Prime Minister William Gladstone's cabinet, died the following day.

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During the ten years in which the famous race was held, entrants were attracted from a myriad of backgrounds.

After his parents' untimely deaths, Fox Ramsay was raised by his uncle, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Maule-Ramsay. After attending Southgate Hill and Winchester College, Ramsay entered Balliol College, Oxford, in 1903. Three years later, he abandoned his studies in order to recuperate from an illness.

Ramsay, again fit, arrived in Nome in June 1908, accompanied by Colonel Lionel Stuart Weatherly, the newly appointed British vice-consul and a veteran of the African campaigns. Ramsay became involved with extensive mining interests on Buster Creek and Dexter Creek. With his foreign manner and slight stammer, the young Scot quickly became the butt of jokes at the hands of the jesting Nomeites.

When the summer season ended and the first snow fell, Ramsay acquired a team of dogs and became an ardent musher. Always seeking entertainment, several Nomeites conceived a plan making Ramsay the victim of a practical joke. They drew him into the 1909 All-Alaska Sweepstakes Race by convincing the young *cheechako* (tenderfoot) that he could win. Ramsay was enthusiastic about the challenge and immediately set to training his team of ten malamute-type dogs. He anxiously awaited the day of the event.

On race day, with blizzard winds blowing, Ramsay barely heard the crack of the revolver which sent his team, twelfth to start, upon its way to Candle. Soon his team became unmanageable, running in circles upon the ice and eventually breaking the gangline to dash back to Nome and the warmth and security of their kennels. Ramsay towed his sled the two miles back to Nome to find his team entertaining the jeering spectators. More determined than ever, he again hitched up his team for a second attempt to reach Candle.

As the race continued, telephone updates reported Ramsay miles behind the other racers, and local humorists posted notices around Nome that the young Scot was stopping frequently for tea and crumpets as he made his social calls to the various roadhouses. Scotty Allan, maintaining his reputation as King of the Arctic Trail, victoriously returned to Nome as winner before Ramsay even reached Candle, the halfway point. Arriving at Candle, Ramsay found the air still and the sun shining. The race was a lost cause, so he decided to include several days of caribou hunting on the Buckland River. He returned to Nome four weeks after the start of the race, and good-naturedly notified the judges of his team's arrival. He was greeted by the gibes of his teasing neighbors. Feigning disinterest, he responded to them in a friendly fashion. Inwardly, he vowed he would not be last again.

Ramsay set out to find a solution which would allow him to keep his vow. At the very time Ramsay was pondering his problem, luck brought him in contact with Norwegian-born Iver Olsen who had spent the previous winter searching for gold across the Bering Sea. In the Anadyr River basin of Siberia, Olsen had become a devotee of the tireless little dogs he encountered in the domain of the tzar. Ramsay learned of the tough little dogs from Olsen, and decided to import them for the next All-Alaska Sweepstakes Race.

Ramsay, accompanied by Olsen, set sail for Siberia on July 8, 1909, aboard the schooner *Arctic*. The vessel made its way up the Anadyr River to Markovo, a settlement near the old Russian Fort Anadyrsk, some 250 miles inland from the Gulf of Anadyr. Here, Olsen advised, Ramsay could get good dogs from the many natives who came to barter their goods. Ramsay acquired approximately fifty dogs, and when the *Arctic* returned from Siberia, she had dogs howling from every port hole. When the *Arctic* docked with its yelping cargo, the Nomeites were even more incredulous and derisive, nicknaming Ramsay's canines, small by Alaskan standards, "Siberian Rats."

Paying no attention to the criticisms of his new dogs, Ramsay secured the services of two men, John Johnson, a native of Finland, and Swedish-born Charles Johnson (no relation), to assist in training the dogs for the 1910 All-Alaska Sweepstakes. Ramsay decided to divide the dogs into three teams of twelve to fifteen dogs. He would personally enter and drive one of the teams. Charles Johnson would drive the second, entered in the name of Ramsay's friend, Colonel Weatherly. The third team, entered in the name of Ramsay's uncle, Colonel Charles Ramsay, was to be driven by John Johnson.

In February 1910, to stir interest in the forthcoming event, the Nome Kennel Club announced a match race between Ramsay's team of dogs and that of William Goosak's, a Cossack and the third place finisher in the previous Sweepstakes event. Each of the drivers posted $500 in the winner-take-all race from Nome to Solomon Roadhouse and return, a total distance of sixty-five miles. The two teams left Nome on February 20, with Ramsay initially taking the lead. Goosak, displeased with Ramsay's pace, quickly passed his opponent, but both drivers reached Solomon Roadhouse simultaneously.

Ramsay rested his team the required five minutes, then turned

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his team back to Nome. Goosak rested an additional four minutes, but overtook Ramsay as the teams crossed Bonanza Flats, northeast of Port Safety. After passing through Port Safety, Ramsay again sped past the Russian. Goosak, desperately trying to pick up his team's pace, broke a stanchion on his sled. Ramsay gradually extended his lead to twelve minutes at Cape Nome and eighteen minutes at Fort Davis, only three miles from Nome. The young Scot crossed the finish line first, completing the sixty-five mile race in seven hours, ten minutes and thirty seconds. Seventeen minutes and thirty seconds later, Goosak limped across the finish line with a broken sled and a fatigued team of dogs.

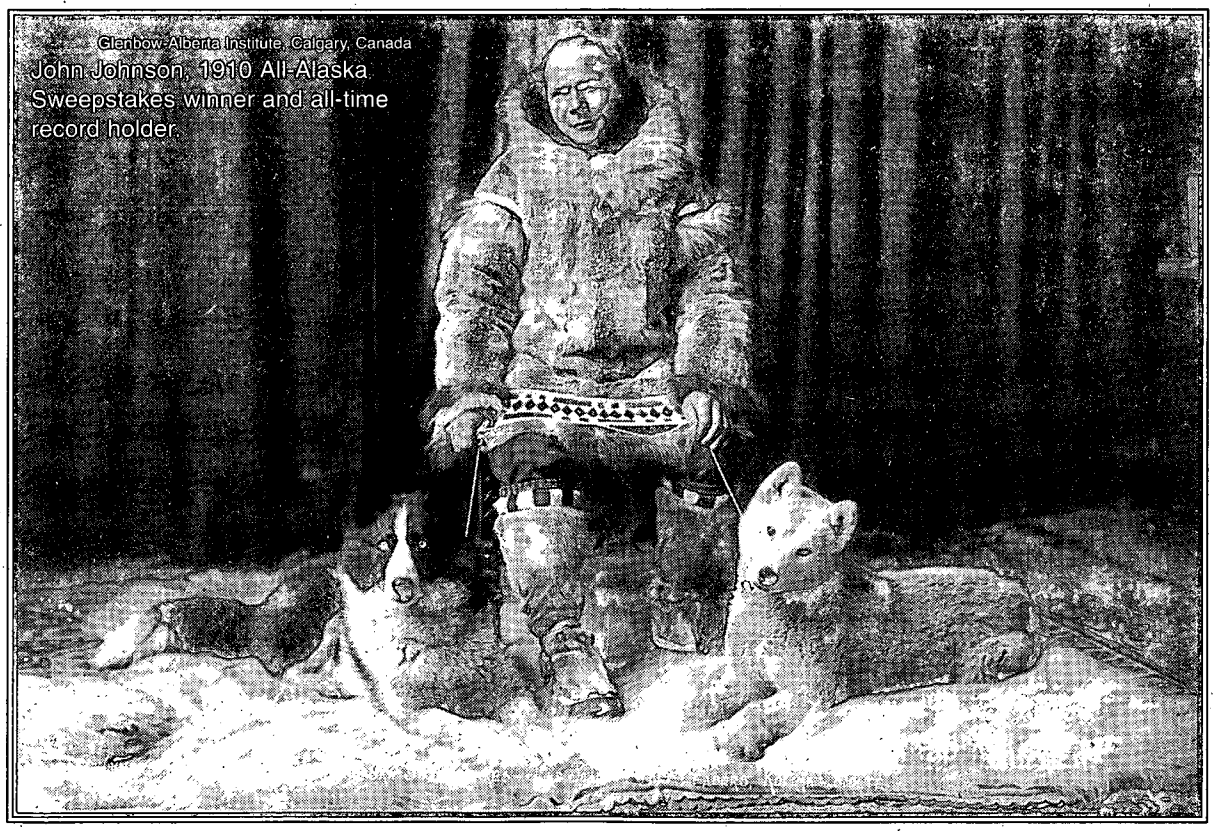
On Thursday, April 7, 1910, almost every man, woman, and child abandoned the city to find a spot on the ice of the Bering Sea, opposite Barracks Square, to witness the start of the third annual All-Alaska Sweepstakes Race. The starting line was surrounded by a wire fence to prevent the hundreds of eager spectators from crowding in upon the racing teams and officials. A drawing determined that John Johnson, driving the Colonel Charles Ramsay team of fourteen dogs, was the first to approach the starting line.

At exactly ten o'clock in the morning, with the sun shining overhead, race marshal Thomas Cader Powell sent Johnson on his way. Ten minutes later Charles Johnson, the second starter, mushed his Ramsay-owned team toward Candle. Fox Ramsay, the sixth starter in the race, waited in anticipation. A year and a week had passed since his earlier failure. At eleven o'clock in the morning, as the crowd pressed forward to view the Scotsman's team decked out in the red and black Ramsay tartan, the starter's revolver fired and Ramsay drove his team out of the chute. Once again, some good-natured shouts and laughter followed him.

For the first fifty-one miles to Topkok, the racers remained well-bunched with only thirty-four minutes of racing time separating the leader, Scotty Allan, and the seventh place driver, Charles Johnson. At Timber, sixty-seven miles into the race, telephones relayed the news that John Johnson had taken a sixteen-minute lead, and Ramsay was holding third place. Here, for the first time during the race, Johnson let his team rest. Fifteen minutes later, still holding the advantage, he again took to the trail. The message also stated that Ramsay was hauling his leader dog, Kreelsow, who had fought with a teammate several days earlier and had set out with a still wounded leg. The odds against Ramsay, already high, increased in the betting pool.

As darkness encompassed the drivers, some of them rested or slept, but John Johnson and Ramsay raced forward, the former holding the lead and both driving at a furious pace. Johnson arrived at Telephone, 125 miles out, at midnight having covered the distance in fourteen hours. Here he rested for thirty-three minutes. Ramsay reached Telephone at four o'clock in the morning in second place with Johnson holding a three-hour lead. He also rested his dogs.

John Johnson reached the halfway point at Candle just after four o'clock on the afternoon of the second day of the race. He had covered the 204 miles in thirty hours, twenty-three minutes, without sleep, having paused a total of three



Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary, Canada

John Johnson, 1910 All-Alaska Sweepstakes winner and all-time record holder.

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hours and forty-two minutes along the trail to rest his dogs. Following the check-in and feeding of his team, Johnson rested for four hours, then turned his sled back toward Nome.

Fox Ramsay arrived at Candle three hours and fifteen minutes behind Johnson, checked in with the race officials, and immediately departed for Nome without resting, gaining a ninety-five minute lead over John Johnson. As Ramsay left Candle, Scotty Allan and Charles Johnson arrived, the two vying for third place.

A few miles from Candle, Ramsay had a cache of supplies in a camp maintained by an assistant. On his drive toward the half-way point, Ramsay had not stopped for supplies because he wanted to hasten to Candle to collect some side wagers. Ramsay had waved his hand at his assistant, indicating that he would stop on his return trip. The assistant misunderstood the signal and thought that he was wanted in Candle. He promptly left the camp and proceeded into town by a different route. After checking in at Candle, Ramsay arrived back at the supply camp and found it deserted. No food was ready, and he had no one to aid in caring for the dogs. Tired and hungry, he began the weary drive to the next camp, First Chance, about thirty-five miles down the trail.

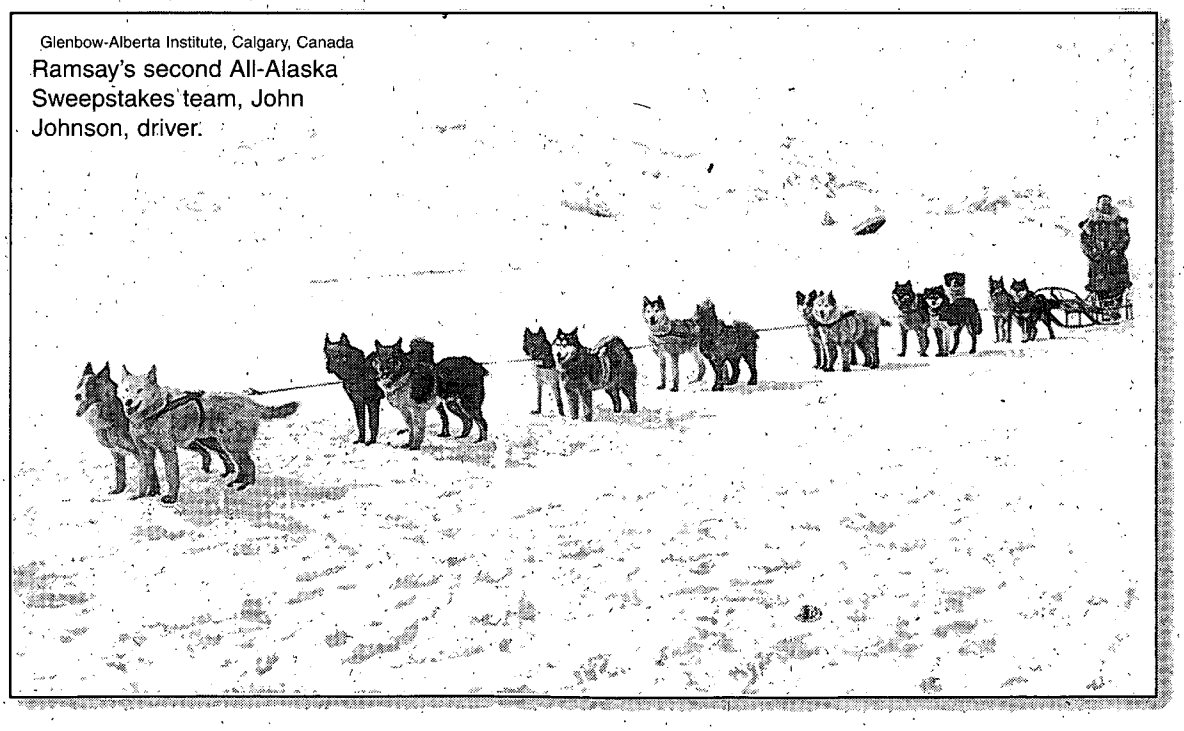
Refreshed from his four-hour rest at Candle, John Johnson passed Ramsay on the trail to First Chance, regaining a fifteen-minute lead over his employer. As both teams held comfortable leads over the rest of the competition, Ramsay decided to rest at First Chance for three and one-half hours.

Excitement surged as the race neared its finish. Every station and rest stop informed the next one that John Johnson and Fox Ramsay, the two leaders, were on the verge of collapse. Scotty Allan was beginning his run at them. At Council, with eighty-five miles remaining in the race, Johnson still held a comfortable lead of two hours over Ramsay and five hours over Allan. Johnson rested for one hour, then again pointed his dogs toward Nome.

Ramsay arrived at Council about two hours following Johnson's departure and rested for one and one-half hours. Retaking the trail, Ramsay realized that it was now necessary to coast his team. Should he push too hard, and if Johnson's team failed, Allan might defeat them both. Ramsay reluctantly held his dogs back.

With the smooth ice trail of Melsing's Creek slipping beneath his runners, Allan continued to press Ramsay. He gained rapidly on the trail to Topkok, cutting Ramsay's lead to fifty-two minutes. Ramsay rested for eight minutes at Topkok, and Allan proceeded right through the village without stopping. Allan passed Ramsay on the trail approaching Solomon Roadhouse, arriving there seventeen minutes before Ramsay, and cutting Ramsay's lead to a mere twenty-three minutes. With only four racers remaining in this rugged race of endurance, John Johnson's lead of two hours and forty-eight minutes seemed insurmountable. Ramsay and Allan were contending for second place and John Hegness, the remaining competitor, was only eleven minutes behind Allan. Ramsay passed Allan near Safety to increase his lead to one hour. Allan, in turn, repassed Ramsay on the trail to Cape Nome, once again cutting Ramsay's lead to twenty-one minutes.

At sixteen minutes past eleven o'clock in the morning, the signal gun at Fort Davis announced that the first team was on the way home. Fourteen minutes past noon, John Johnson's team crossed the finish line, securing first place and estab-



Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary, Canada
Ramsay's second All-Alaska Sweepstakes team, John Johnson, driver.

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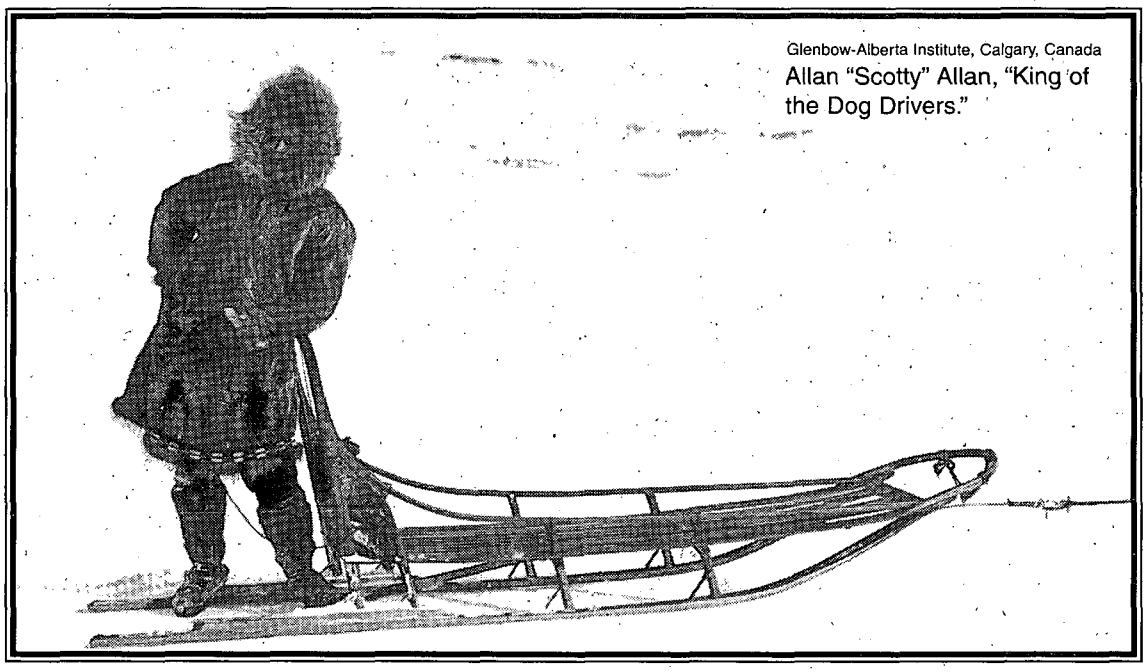

Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary, Canada
Allan "Scotty" Allan, "King of the Dog Drivers."

lishing the permanent record for the 408-mile event—seventy-four hours, fourteen minutes, and twenty-two seconds. Having led most of the race, Johnson had eaten only two boiled eggs on the trail and had slept little. He suffered early signs of snow-blindness in Death Valley and had relied on his leader, Kolyma, for the remainder of the race. Near the conclusion, he tied a rope around his waist and assisted his fatigued team in pulling the sled those final miles. Two dogs were in the sled's basket when it came under the wire but his leader was fit, and impressed the spectators with a self-satisfied look which asserted that he had led his team to victory.

Allan crossed the finish line three and one-half hours later as the spectators scanned the frozen coastline for Ramsay. Should he arrive within forty minutes of Allan, his elapsed time would give him second place. At nine minutes after three o'clock, with twenty-four minutes to spare, Fox Ramsay crossed under the wire with his team while a respectful crowd cheered the feisty Scot. When interviewed he remarked:

> I am confident that I could have won first money, but I was afraid to shove the dogs too hard as I was not sure that Johnson could hold up as he did, and it might have made a condition for Allan to beat both my teams. I ate heartily on the trip and fed the dogs a little bit every now and then, but I drove the 104 miles at one stretch without a bit of food. The food was composed of three equal parts beef, mutton, and dried salmon, all ground up. It was the most fun I ever had.

The experience was also profitable to Ramsay as local bookmakers quickly ascertained that the young Scot had won a considerable amount of their money, rumored to be almost $100,000.

Soon after the 1910 All-Alaska Sweepstakes Race, the peripatetic Ramsay left Nome for China where he invested in a mining interest. On July 7, 1914, the popular Scot returned to visit Nome and was given a royal reception. He remained in Nome until August 4, when England declared war against Germany, then immediately sailed for Seattle, crossed the United States, and departed for Scotland to join the war effort. Attached to the British III Cavalry Division as an interpreter, Ramsay was dispatched to Belgium and participated in the battle at Ypres. He later was transferred to France. During the January 30, 1915, German assault at Soissons, all but eighteen members of his regiment were lost in action. Ramsay and the remaining seventeen were wounded. For his service in the engagement, he was decorated with the Military Cross and Bar by the British government.

Following the war, he married Rose Arbuthnot-Leslie of Warthill, Aberdeenshire. The newlyweds traveled to Southern Rhodesia where they started citrus farming near Bulawayo. In 1926, he contracted pneumonia and died at Marandelles at the age of forty-one.

On October 20, 1926, Charles Fox Maule-Ramsay was buried in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, half a world away from the scene of his record-setting career as a dog driver. His unique record included the 1909 race in which he established the all-time record for the slowest team in Sweepstakes history. More impressive, it was in the 1910 race where the Ramsay-owned team driven by John Johnson established the fastest all-time record for the event, while Ramsay's own finish remained the third fastest all-time performance. The scion of a Scottish laird had conquered the most arduous challenge of America's last frontier, the All-Alaska Sweepstakes Race.

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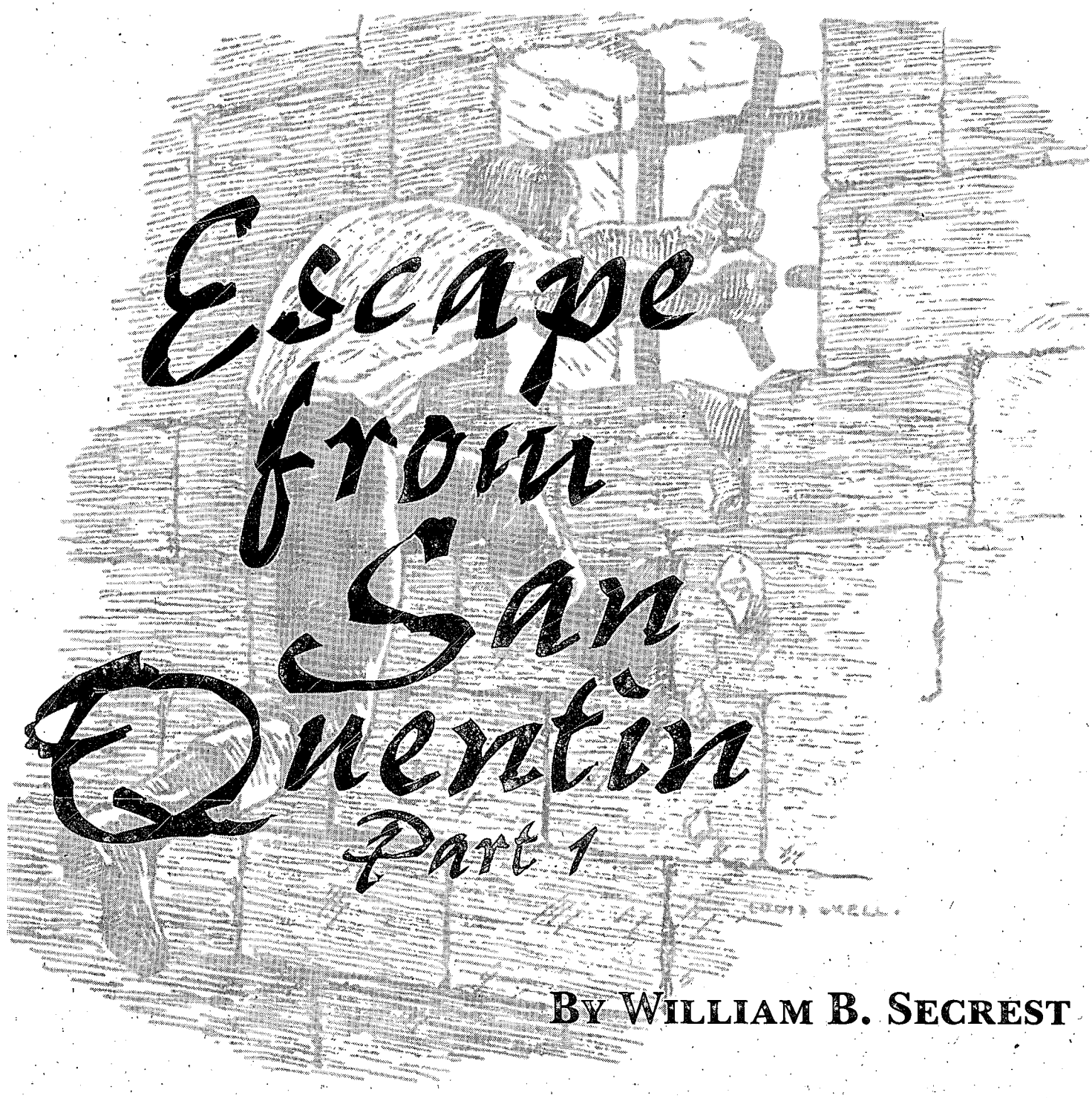

Escape from San Quentin

Part 1

By William B. Secrest

"Hardships," growled the convict! "Let me tell you, young man, nobody can conceive, nobody knows, or ever can know, what we suffered."

Charley Dorsey was describing his escape from San Quentin to a wide-eyed reporter in 1890. A murderous stage robber, Dorsey was serving a life term in California's state prison in 1887 when he met George Shinn who was doing a twelve-year stretch for an attempted train robbery. A "trusty," Shinn had outside privileges. He drove a wagon hauling supplies and other materials to sites outside the walls. Well-known to the gate guards, they always waved him through, usually without checking his load. Barring any unforeseen events, the two convicts planned an escape that was as simple as it was foolproof

Waiting for a stormy night in December 1887, Dorsey crawled into the bed of Shinn's wagon and threw a tarp over himself and the goods being hauled. It was black and miserable out, the rain coming down in sheets. As usual, the guards waved Shinn through and he headed straight for the wharf. A small boat had already been selected and the two convicts pushed off into the choppy waters.

Reaching the Contra Costa shore sometime later, the two men were soaked to the skin. They hid the boat and headed east on foot. It was a trip of some days and incredible hardship. "It rained all the time," Dorsey later recalled, "yet we did

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not dare to build a fire to warm ourselves. We were nearly famished, and ate raw vegetables and whatever we could lay our hands on....I was sick and tried to persuade Shinn to go on and look out for himself, but he wouldn't do it."

Finally reaching Benicia, the two men caught a train for Sacramento. They were free! Plunging back into a life of crime, Dorsey and Shinn were recaptured in Chicago in 1890. Shackled and despondent, the two convicts were hailed as heroes by their old cronies at San Quentin. Now, they were part of an elite tradition that was initiated almost as soon as the state prison was established. Escape *was* possible. With a little effort and daring, a convict could be free again.

And escape they did for the next one hundred years. This is the story of some of those escapes and of men who would rather risk death and flogging than spend dreary, tedious years behind walls and bars.

In April 1850, all county jails in California were declared by the governor to be state prisons and the prisoners could be used on various public works. This system was quickly outmoded by inadequate local jail facilities. In early 1851, General Mariano Vallejo and a certain politician named James M. Estell promised to pay the state $137,000 in return for locating the state capitol on a piece of their property. The legislature quickly accepted the offer. They had recently learned that most eastern prisons lost money and Vallejo and Estell's offer included the management and building of a state prison. They would also feed and clothe the convicts, in return for which they were to be able to work them, as they saw fit, for their own profit.

Since they had no state prison, as yet, Vallejo and his partner subleased the few state prisoners to San Francisco County Sheriff Jack Hays. Finding his own county jail inadequate, Hays outfitted an abandoned ship, the *Wabau*, as a prison brig and in mid-December of 1851 anchored it off Angel Island, in San Francisco Bay. Here the prisoners were put to work quarrying stone for the foundation of the new prison cellblocks. Hays expected to make a good deal of money on the deal and didn't hesitate to spend his own funds on both the *Wabau* and the convicts. But, famous Indian fighter and Texas Ranger as he was, Hays didn't know what he was getting into. He was soon to find out.

Author's Map

San Francisco Bay and the San Quentin area, circa 1850.

Early on the morning of January 7, 1852, two of the *Wabau* prison guards were sent to San Francisco for provisions. The other three guards brought the twelve prisoners up on deck and prepared to go ashore and begin the day's quarrying. As two of the guards supervised the lowering of the boat, they were suddenly attacked and overpowered. The third guard was seized from behind, quickly tied and thrown into a cell. As the other two guards were being tied up, some of the convicts wanted to kill them, but were dissuaded by the others.

Arming themselves with muskets and pistols from the armory, the still-ironed convicts scrambled into the boat and headed for Contra Costa, across the bay. This was the first mass prison break, and posses were quickly in the field. While the authorities were notified in San Francisco, several of the prison guards, accompanied by a crew of sailors, followed the convicts closely in a whale boat. A sheriff's posse quickly left San Francisco, while yet another group began closing in from Martinez. "They were so closely pursued," noted the San Francisco *Herald*, "as to be compelled to throw away their blankets....As there are some desperate rascals among them, and all armed either with muskets or revolvers it is anticipated there will be some fighting before they are secured."

Hemmed in on three sides, most of the convicts were recaptured without a fight. Several managed to elude the posses, however, and made their way south to San Juan, where they obtained horses and headed for Indian country. On the San Joaquin River, they crossed on Thomas J. Alsbury's ferry, then robbed and destroyed his store and ranch house. A dispatch from Fort

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Miller dated January 20, reported:

> ...Major Savage, upon hearing of these outrages...set out in pursuit of them, and by the united insertions of himself and Captain Lyons, the commander of the fort, succeeded in catching the leader of the band, from whom they learned the above particulars. The major is now personally engaged in the pursuit....

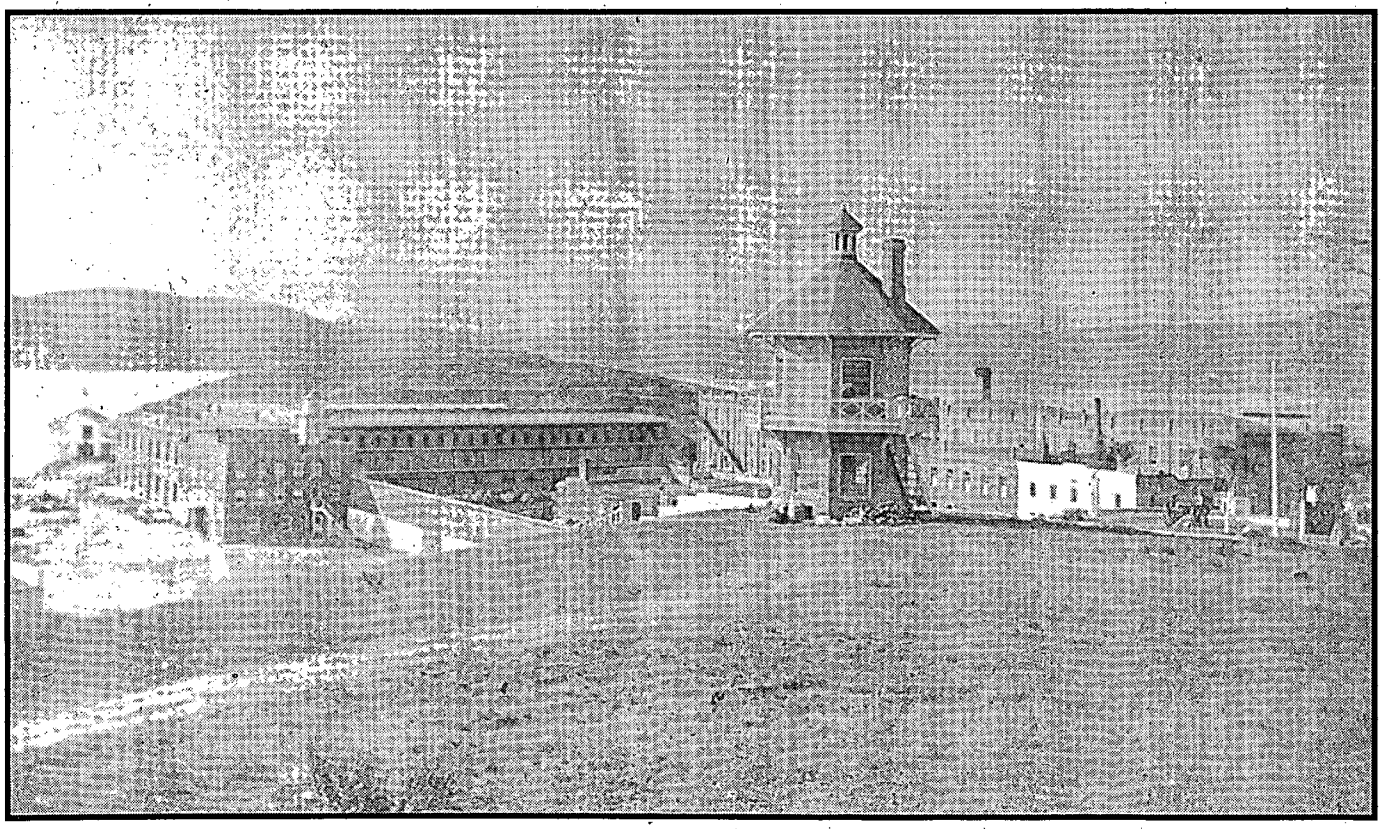
Major James D. Savage was a noted Indian fighter and rancher, but it is not known if he captured any of the remaining escaped convicts.

Sheriff Hays pursued his erstwhile prisoners relentlessly, and most were ultimately captured. But, he must have had foreboding feelings at this point. He had no sooner toted up his out-of-pocket expenses on extra guards, posses and rewards, when word was received in mid-May of another escape attempt on the *Wabau*. There were some thirty-two prisoners on the old brig at this time, probably the worst being one Cyrus Williamson, a twenty-two-year-old highwayman from Ohio, He had been convicted in El Dorado County on a burglary charge, but escaped jail with a $500 price on his head. Recaptured, he was assigned to the *Wabau* where he again began looking about for a means of escape.

On the morning of May 15, 1852, one of the guards, a man named Hall, went below to herd the prisoners on deck with their night buckets. Unknown to him, some planks separating the cells had been removed and a dozen convicts had gathered in one cell. Hall was unlucky enough to have opened this particular cell first. He was unarmed, but as the convicts rushed him he "kept them at bay for a short time," noted a newspaper account, "by his skill in pugilism." He was quickly overwhelmed by sheer numbers and borne to the floor, but even as he called out, "Look out on deck!," he seized a convict's hair and butted him fiercely.

The convicts now streamed up the ladder where they were confronted on deck by a pistol-wielding, twenty-year-old George Kohler, captain of the guards. As the prisoners rushed him Kohler fired, but his weapon was turned aside by Williamson as he exclaimed, "Damn your pistol." There was no second chance as the exploded cap kept the cylinder from revolving. Kohler smashed a convict's face using his weapon as a club, but he was quickly mobbed as the prisoners tried to throw him overboard. Fighting desperately, Kohler was assisted by one of the prisoners, William Davis, who grabbed a boat hook and tried to drive off the attackers. When they turned on Davis he was forced to jump into the water, but he swam to shore and alerted others who quickly armed themselves.

On the *Wabau*, Kohler scrambled to his feet when the other guards advanced, firing at the convicts. All was pandemonium now as Williamson saw his chance at escape, evaporating. The account in the San Francisco *Herald* described the action well:



Author's Collection

A San Quentin guard post overlooks the prison yard and entrance, circa 1860s. The guard quarters and offices line the wall at left, while factories are to the right. A guard and howitzer can be seen next to the flagpole at right.

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...Cyrus Williamson broke from the rest and attempted to run down into the cabin where the arms were kept. He was slightly wounded by a shot from one of the guards and then run through the body by Hall with a bayonet, receiving a wound which proved mortal. In the confusion Kohler received a shot in his shoulder, fired by one of his supporters, but we are glad to learn that his wound is not of a serious character.

The convicts were forced before the guards, and Kohler having now recovered and armed himself with revolvers, a final assault was made with charged bayonets upon the ruffians, and with the assistance of the reinforcements under Davis, they were forced below and secured.

As they were herded below decks again, one of the convicts shouted at Kohler, "You are the damned rascal we intend to kill." But the revolt was over. Cy Williamson survived his wounds and under the name Cyrus Skinner served more time in prison. When the Idaho and Montana gold strikes enticed him there, he ran a saloon and acted as a fence and spy for the Henry Plummer outlaw band. He was lynched by the vigilantes in early 1864.

Hays, who had expended some $11,000 on his convict lease plan, now wanted out. Estell only released him when the legislature was forced on May 1, 1852, to pass a bill providing for the construction of a state prison building. Although the original contract had provided that Vallejo and Estell were to build the prison, the latter now whined that he had not had enough time to make back any of his original costs with convict labor.

On July 7, 1852, the state of California paid $10,000 for a twenty-acre prison site in Marin County, across the bay from San Francisco. Angel Island was only a few miles offshore from this site and the *Wabau* was now towed and anchored in a snug cove next to what was called Corte Madera, or Point Quentin—later San Quentin. The convicts were put to work leveling the ground, digging wells, and building roads, while a few outbuildings were put up for temporary use. Work gangs were sent out to San Francisco and other outlying areas as Estell frantically tried to turn his prison into a profit-making venture. Brick-making and quarrying were still a principal operation, stone and brick being loaded on a prison schooner and sold in San Francisco.

Cellblocks were a primary consideration, however, and by the summer of 1853 the first permanent building was under construction. Called "The Stones," because of the material used, the building was a two-story structure 180 feet long and twenty-four feet wide. Forty-eight cells were upstairs, while a dormitory and offices were below. Although the number varied from month to month, by January 1854, when the "Stones" was completed, some 250 convicts were on hand, 150 of them still being housed on the *Wabau*.

By this time also, a bar had been installed aboard the *Wabau*, while several other saloons and a boardinghouse and hotel were established nearby.

In November 1854, a Sacramento newspaper described the growing prison site:

There is no walled area for the prisoners, numbering some two hundred, to be employed in during their hours of labor. The expenses of keeping them, however, amounts to seventy-five thousand dollars per year. The lessee employees [sic] one guard for every eight prisoners.

The force is posted with military precision. Artillery is placed at convenient intervals, and the appearance of the ground is somewhat like a garrison, always excepting the walls. At the guard houses, which are about one hundred yards apart, horses are kept saddled ready for immediate use....

When an outbreak takes place, by previous orders, all the prisoners who wish not to be considered "in," throw themselves flat upon the ground and thus escape being fired upon. Some of them, especially the Indians and Chinamen, enjoy the sport hugely, as they escape some few hours work by the operation. Some fifty or sixty prisoners have escaped within about six months, of whom more than one-half have been retaken, at a heavy expense to the lessee....

Although no accurate tally was ever kept of the dead and wounded in escape attempts, minor affairs were almost on a daily basis. When one convict disappeared, every corner and hole was checked with no results. Finally, a snitch suggested he might be in the chimney of the steam boiler. When a fire was lighted, the victim let out a yell and came scrambling from his refuge. Another prisoner buried himself in the brick kiln and wasn't discovered until he was starved out. One convict's disappearance stirred interest in a barrel floating near the shore. A perceptive guard put a pistol shot through the barrel and wasn't surprised to hear a yell of protest as the convict quickly surfaced outside his cover.

Many of the escapes were of a more subtle variety. When Thomas Foley shot and killed John Dunn, editor of the *Pacific Police Gazette*, he was promptly convicted and given a three-year sentence for manslaughter. He arrived at Point San Quentin on July 1, 1854. The judge, Elcan Heydenfeldt, had written a letter to Estell asking that he show every courtesy to his newest prisoner. Either Dunn was extremely unpopular, or Foley was very well liked. The terms of liberality showered on Mr. Foley must have made some of the guards, at that time without uniforms and poorly paid, wonder if they were on the right side.

For starters, Estell met Foley at the prison wharf. In his office the new convict was told that he could live outside the prison at Estell's nearby boardinghouse. The prison superintendent was told to allow Foley full liberty as he never should have been convicted and would undoubtedly soon receive a pardon.

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As if this wasn't enough, within two weeks Foley was made a guard on the night shift, given a weapon and put on salary.

But convict Foley soon grew impatient with the pardon alluded to by Mr. Estell. And, despite all the comforts of his prison life, in September he utilized his access to the prison safe by disappearing with $500 of Estell's money.

To allay criticism, when Estell had any control over the matter the more desperate escape attempts were often not reported. For example, in his reports Estell reported only twelve prisoners had been killed through 1854. A report by state prison inspectors, however, noted that "more than double that number have been killed by the officers and guards, in the repeated insurrections, escapes, and attempts at recapture, and their names not reported to the inspec-tors, for fear of the trouble and expense of a legal investigation." There was no denying that escapes were epidemic in 1854.

On a foggy night on May 6, 1854, four convicts cut their way through the roof of the new cellblock, tied up the guard and disappeared. On July 24, twelve convicts in a work detail at Sheppard's Cove, turned on their guards and seized a small boat and made good their escape, although several were killed in the fight. And, the following September, several guards were escorting fourteen prisoners past a local brick-yard about a mile from the prison. Apparently friends of the convicts surprised the guards as the convicts made a break for a whaleboat that was beached close by. At least two guards and some prisoners were killed in the resulting fight, some of the prisoners escaping in the boat.

Besides these more organized efforts, the convict registers show that there were many individual escapes, also.

But the big break came late that year. On December 27, a group of convicts were loading a sloop at the Marin Island wharf, several miles from the prison. One of the prisoners was called "Cherokee Bob," a Georgia gambler whose mother was an Indian. Bob had been in various shooting and cutting scrapes, but when he stole a horse in Mariposa County he drew the stiff sentence of ten years in the state prison. Just twenty-one years old at the time, Bob arrived at San Quentin on March 21, 1854. Afraid that his Georgia relations might get wind of his fate, he refused to give any name other than "Cherokee Bob" and he is so listed on the prison register. His real name was Henry J. Talbot.

As the prisoners were loading stone on the sloop, Cherokee Bob suddenly grabbed Guard Captain Ben Pullen and wrestled him aboard the ship. Another convict grabbed Pullen's rifle and opened fire on the other guards. The fight was on. Convicts in other work areas saw the fight and headed for the hills. Cherokee Bob and his cohorts now tried desperately to cast off in the sloop as the guards poured in a withering fire. Bob held the captain up in front of him as a shield, the guard sustaining several wounds. Convict John Thompson was killed as he tried to adjust the rigging at the top of the mast. The wharf was littered with wounded prisoners. As the sloop finally headed across the bay, two of the dead convicts were dumped over the side. Nearly thirty convicts were involved in the break. When the blood-splashed sloop ran up on the shore, they staggered, crawled, and ran into the brush and trees and tried desperately to hide or keep moving. The San Francisco *Herald* reported:

Author's Collection

Jim Smith came to California during the gold rush, and spent most of his life in California before being locked up in, and escaping from, San Quentin. He died in prison in 1886.

> ...Cherokee Bob was found whilst the pursuit was being carried on so lively on the hills in Contra Costa. He says Watkins was shot in the arm and another ball had passed through his lungs. He was spitting blood when they separated and was thought to be dangerously wounded. Collin Douglass was slightly wounded. Michael Hines was brought back badly shot...William Powers was badly wounded in the leg. James Smith was also found by the road unable to proceed further in his wounded condition. Richard Berry had a few buckshot in his shoulder....
>
> The convicts robbed every ranch as they came to it, taking first the arms, their horses, saddles, clothing, and everything else they fancied....

Some twenty-one convicts were gunshot, some quite badly. Although Cherokee Bob was reported

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mortally wounded and "sinking rapidly," he managed to rally and claimed to have saved Captain Pullen's life. Estell reported "the hospital is filled with the dead and dying. It is a melancholy sight, but could not be avoided."

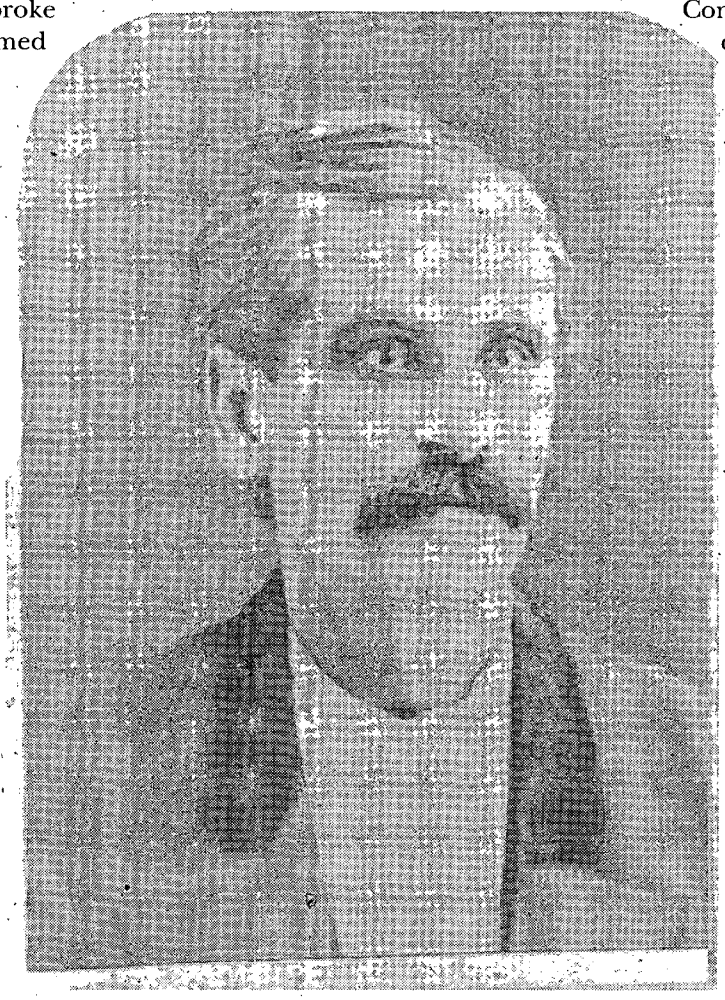
Most of the escaped convicts had shaved heads and were easily recognized as they made their way towards San Jose, plundering farm houses. Most were riding stolen horses by now. When they broke into the house of a man named Hughes, he drove them off, wounding several with shotgun blasts. After a chase and exchange of gunfire, a posse from San Jose captured six of the fugitives and housed them in the county jail. The *San Jose Semi-Weekly Tribune* reported:

> Yesterday the gentlemen who arrested the escaped prison convicts telegraphed to the officers and agents in San Francisco the fact, and desired a description of the men; an answer was returned that they would not pay for the dispatch to communicate the desired intelligence. A number of our citizens made known to the agent here to inform them that they would be responsible for the expenses....

Needless to say, the San Jose citizens were outraged at the attitude of the prison officials. To make matters worse, all but one of the fugitives dug their way out of the jail and disappeared. "Now suppose these fellows are recaptured," railed the *Tribune*, "would it not be natural, altogether as a matter of course, that the nearest tree should serve as a gallows?"

A report in early January noted eight had been recaptured, four killed, with ten convicts still at large. It had been a bloody moment in prison history.

Prison officials hardly had time to catch their breath before Marin Island erupted again. Rather than make the trip to and from the prison grounds every day, convict work parties were housed in the old *Wabau*, anchored just offshore. The night of April 12, 1855, was pitch black as a howling rainstorm drenched the area. It was just the kind of night a group of the convicts were waiting for. They had smuggled a saw into a cell that butted against the side of the ship and carved out the better part of an exit. Several other cells had had doorways made also, so that some eight convicts collected in the last cell, with the outside access. As the thunder roared and the convicts made the last few cuts that would open their door to the outside, they knew any guards on deck would have sought shelter. In a few minutes the sawed-out panel was pushed out and the convicts began squirming through the exit and dropping into the water.



Author's Collection

John "Black Jack" Bowen began his prison career in 1853 and escaped many times over the years.

Collecting on shore, the convicts seized a small boat on the other side of the island and quickly pushed out into the choppy waters of the bay. Convicts John Hammond, Jim Smith, John Kelly, and Jack Bowen were all experienced sailors and had no difficulty navigating across to the Contra Costa shore where they disappeared into the stormy night.

"Black Jack" Bowen was a handsome highwayman from Rhode Island who spent much of his life in and out of prison. He was recaptured soon after the break, as were Jim Smith, George Wright, and John Campbell. The four other convicts made a clean getaway.

Estell and his various cohorts and partners were, by this time, seriously concerned about the situation. When they had originally assumed control of the state convicts they had expected to have no more than fifty or so in their charge at any given time. By January 1855, however, they had 258 prisoners to look after, while the constant escape attempts were resulting in steadily mounting costs.

There seems to be little reason to doubt that a conscious decision was now made by Estell to get rid of some of these problems. It was later stated by a guard that whenever a lone prisoner escaped, they were not to report it except to their immediate superior. "I will say," reported guard John Gray before an investigating committee, "that not one out of ten of the prisoners that escape is known outside of the prison to have done so...." But there was more.

Estell had decided to get rid of

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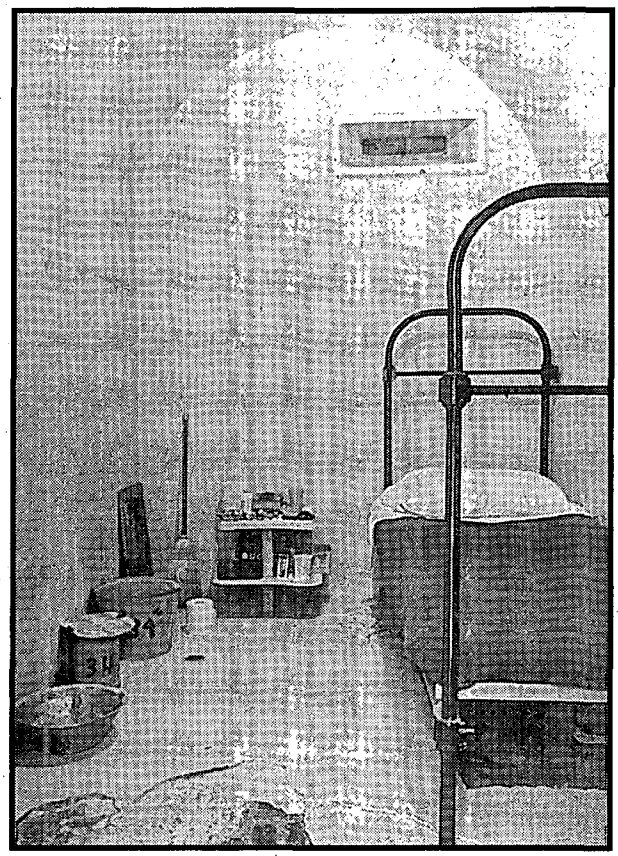
some of the more troublesome convicts by staging mock escapes. This was later testified to by both guards and convicts. As if this wasn't bad enough, rumor later had it that Cherokee Bob paid Estell some $1,800 to allow him to safely escape. Guard John Gray testified that:

> ...A person named [Asa] Estes was Captain of the guard. Estes at one time paid a visit to San Francisco and on his return he requested me to take charge of some prisoners, named Cherokee Bob, William White, Thomas Hodges and James Stewart, and a man named Calcotte [actually, Carrico], whom I was to take on, ostensibly to work, but according to instructions from Estes, I was to permit them to escape....

At first glance, this might be the invented tale of a disgruntled employee, except that one of the convicts in on the plot, Bill White, later told the same story:

> I was told by one of our guards that his captain wanted to see me at the office. I went, he told me he wanted to get rid of a portion of the prisoners then in prison. His plan was for me to take the party...out ostensibly to chop wood, and when the first tree fell, we were to break and run. I was to expose myself more than the rest. The guards were to shoot blank cartridges at me....My opinion always has been that he adopted this course to make the contract system odious with the people, so he could be relieved of a bad bargain....

The convicts selected for the "break" were Cherokee Bob Talbot; Bill Gristy, or White, a horse thief from Placer County doing ten years; Thomas J. Hodges from Sacramento County, another horse thief; Ned Conver, doing three years from San Joaquin County; Jim Smith, a highwayman and perennial escape artist; James Stewart, a murderer from Trinity County doing ten years; and Asa Carrico. This last character had stolen some $900 from a merchant of Mariposa County, then gathered a mob and directed suspicion toward an old man. When the old fellow wouldn't confess after being strung up to a tree, Carrico had him whipped on the bare back until he was terribly lacerated. This failing, Carrico proposed putting the old man on a bed of hot coals. When the mob hesitated at such measures, Carrico suggested they start pulling out his fingernails with a bullet mold. Through all this the old man refused to confess and he was finally turned loose. When Carrico disappeared a few days later, he was followed by an officer who arrested him and found some of the stolen gold in his possession. He arrived at Corte Madera in August 1852 to serve a five-year term.



San Quentin Museum Association

An early San Quentin cell. the first bunks were merely shelves with a straw mattress and one blanket.

At noon on May 12, 1855, Guard John Gray took the five convicts out into a nearby forest on a wood chopping detail. When the break was made, Gray fired his pistol at White, but without effect. He claimed later that it was only then that he knew he was given weapons charged with blank cartridges. All of the prisoners, with the exception of Stewart who apparently was not appraised of the plot, made a clean getaway.

In time the full import of this break was realized. Carrico disappeared, but Thomas Hodges assumed the name "Tom Bell" and assembled a bandit gang, utilizing Bill White, Ned Conver, and Jim Smith as the nucleus. Setting up a network of informers who advised them of robbery prospects, the gang plundered isolated merchants, teamsters, and travelers. The gang murdered a peddler in Placer County before planning a stagecoach holdup in August 1856. The attempted robbery was a terrible fiasco. The bandits were repulsed by a quick-shooting stage guard, but only after a female passenger was mortally wounded. Posses were quickly in the field and Bell was tracked down by vigilantes who lynched him at Firebaugh's Ferry in Fresno County. Most of the rest of his gang were captured, Bill White making an extended confession of the gang's activities.

The depredations of Tom Bell's gang can be laid directly at the door of James Madison Estell and when various investigations explored these and many other allegations, he would finally lose his hold over the state prison. He was undoubtedly relieved to be rid of such a monumental headache when he sold the remaining years of his contract to John F. McCauley in May 1857. With a new warden came new problems, and the biggest prison break was yet to come.

"Escape From San Quentin" will conclude in the April 1999 issue of *True West.*

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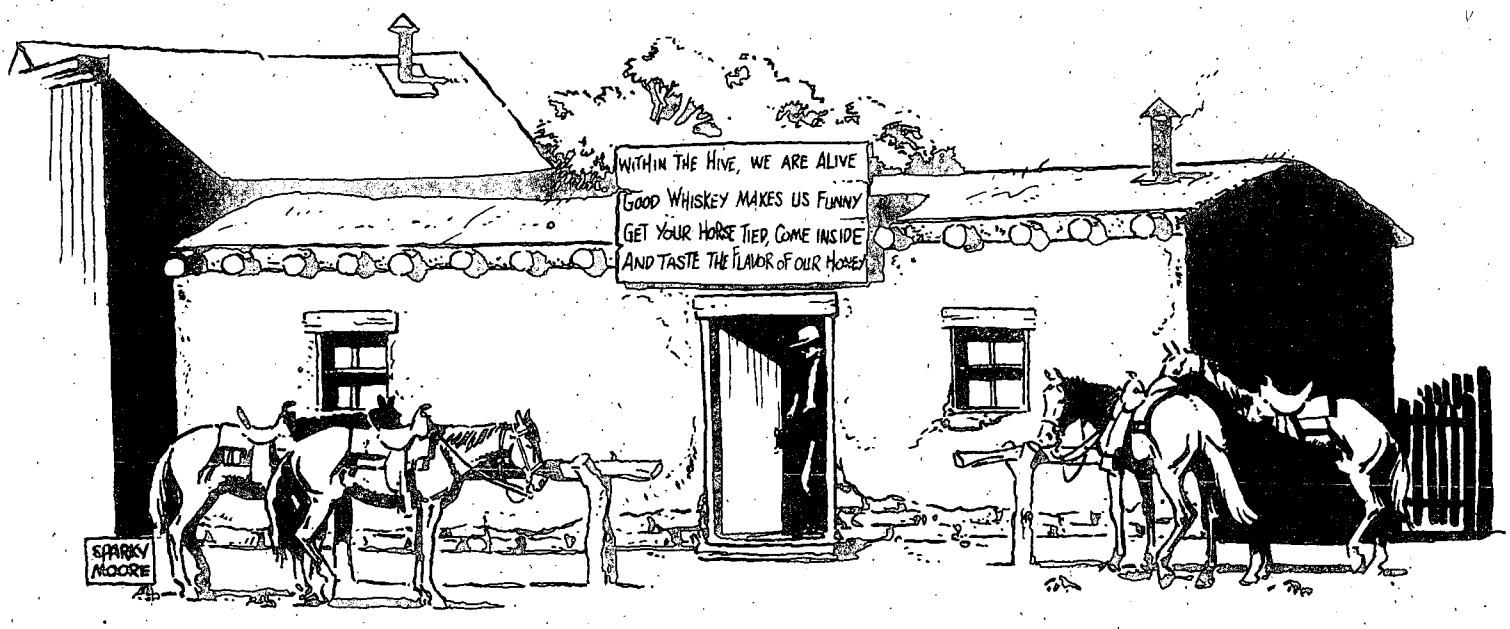

JOHN SHANSSEY

FROM PRIZE RING TO POLITICS

The name John Shanssey may have a faint ring of familiarity to those millions whose interest in the frontier careers of western legends Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday seems never to flag. It was Shanssey who reportedly introduced Earp to Holliday at Fort Griffin, Texas, in 1877, thus beginning perhaps the most famous and controversial friendship in western frontier history. But John Hugo Shanssey (the spelling of the name has posed a challenge to newspapermen and writers who have recorded it as "Shansey, Shannsey, Shaunnessy, Shaunessey, Shaughnessy, Shawnessy, and Schaunessey"), like most figures of the early West, had an interesting life on the frontier himself.

He was born in 1849 or 1850 in either New York or Maryland; the records are contradictory. By 1867, as a big, husky, moon-faced, hair-lipped teenager, he had joined the mainly Irish construction crews laying the Union Pacific track west from Omaha to the historic May 10, 1869, linkup with the Central Pacific at Promontory Point, Utah.

Early on Shanssey decided the life of a sporting man in the "Hell-On-Wheels" railroad towns blossoming across the plains at the end of track held much greater appeal for him than the back-breaking physical labor of a gandy dancer. He spent his time in the tent saloons of the railroad towns, tending bar, gambling, and acting as bouncer.

His prowess in the latter capacity led to some renown as a brawler, and the Hell-On-Wheels gamblers soon were matching him in professional prizefights. On November 9, 1867, he faced John Hardey, another tough pugilist, in a ring pitched on the plain near Cheyenne, Wyoming. Each man was paid $500 to engage in a bare-knuckle battle to a finish under London Prize Ring rules, which in effect allowed everything from butting to eye-gouging. According to a contemporary account, "the fight lasted one hour and forty-three minutes, during which time one hundred and twenty-six rounds were fought, closing by a 'foul' claimed by Hardey's party and allowed by the referee. Both men evinced considerable pluck and all parties were satisfied that this was one of the most honorable fights that has ever transpired." Given the liberality of London Prize Ring rules, it is hard to imagine what "foul" might have been so flagrant as to end the contest.

Shanssey continued his pugilistic career until meeting Mike Donovan on July 4, 1869, at Cheyenne. Donovan, who would go on to become middleweight champion of America and a private boxing instructor to President Theodore Roosevelt, gave Shanssey such a thorough shellack-

By R.K. DeArment

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John Shanssey quickly set her up in the Bee Hive. Greasy, bearded buffalo hunters and slick gamblers alike soon stood in line for a seat at her table.

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ing that he quit the ring forever.

Shanssey followed the sporting crowd from one boom town to the next. By the early 1870s he was operating saloons and gambling halls in Texas. We hear of him at Fort Worth, which was enjoying a cattle trade bonanza and building feverishly in anticipation of the arrival of the Texas and Pacific Railroad. In 1875 he was operating one of the twenty-seven saloons in newly incorporated Jacksboro. In January 1876, he sold his Jacksboro business to W.A. Beason and moved to Fort Griffin, in Shackelford County, center of the buffalo hide-hunting business and probably the wildest camp on a Texas frontier dotted with tough towns.

At Griffin he purchased a two-room adobe building on the main street, opened a combination saloon and gambling house called the Bee Hive, and employed gambling man Mike Fogarty to manage it. Shanssey had a sign painted and mounted over the doorway: "Within the Hive, we are alive; Good Whiskey makes us funny. Get your horse tied, come inside, And taste the flavor of our honey."

Shanssey, in partnership with Charley Myers, also had an interest in the Cattle Exchange Saloon, another popular resort. It was in the Cattle Exchange that he reportedly introduced Wyatt Earp to Doc Holliday. Shanssey's enterprises prospered and he was considered one of the leading businessmen of Griffin.

And then Lottie Deno came to town.

A beautiful auburn-haired woman of courtly manner and address, Lottie Deno would have turned male heads in Chicago, St. Louis, or San Francisco; in rough-hewn Fort Griffin she caused an uproar. Soon after stepping off the Jacksboro stage, she let it be known that she was a professional gambler and would like to open a faro game in one of the saloons. John Shanssey quickly set her up in the Bee Hive. Greasy, bearded buffalo hunters and slick gamblers alike soon stood in line for a seat at her table. A woman of mystery—some said she had been known as "Mystic Maud" at Fort Concho—Lottie was obviously of southern genteel upbringing. No one knew how she became a professional frontier gambler or acquired the skills to succeed at the trade, but her ability became quickly apparent to everyone. John C. Jacobs, the first sheriff of Shackelford County, recalled a memorable night in the Bee Hive when Doc Holliday broke Mike Fogarty's faro bank and Lottie Deno took over the dealer's chair. In a few hours she had won back the $3,000 Fogarty had lost and the rest of Holliday's bankroll as well. They began calling her "Lotta Dinero" in Griffin.

From the day of her arrival, John Shanssey was smitten by Lottie's charms. It was Shanssey who provided the house in which she set up her game, and it was Shanssey who found her a cabin on the edge of town in which to live, and provided the furniture to furnish it. Soon she was recognized as his mistress.

One day a stranger named Johnny Golden stepped off the stage at Griffin. From Lottie Deno's disturbed reaction when she saw him, it was evident he had played a significant role in her past. To a few of her closest admirers, including Shanssey and John Jacobs, she confided that Golden, an itinerant gambler, was her lawful husband. She had run off to escape his abuse and neglect, but now he had found her and wanted to take her away with him.

On July 20, 1877, Fort Griffin City Marshal "Big Bill" Gilson and Deputy Sheriff Jim Draper took Golden into custody on a spurious charge and marched him off through the darkness, saying they were going to lock him up in the post guardhouse at the fort. Moments later shots were heard and the officers returned. Golden had attempted escape, they said, and it had been necessary to shoot him.

According to Henry Herron, later sheriff at Griffin, John Shanssey ordered the execution of Golden and paid the officers $250 for the job. But if Shanssey thought the elimination of Golden would guarantee Lottie's eternal devotion to him, he was badly mistaken. The lady gambler was deeply distressed by the killing.

"She seemed in a way to blame herself for his death and was inconsolable," said John Jacobs. "She gave me the money to pay all his funeral expenses, which amounted to about sixty-five dollars, for a coffin and trimmings and a new suit of

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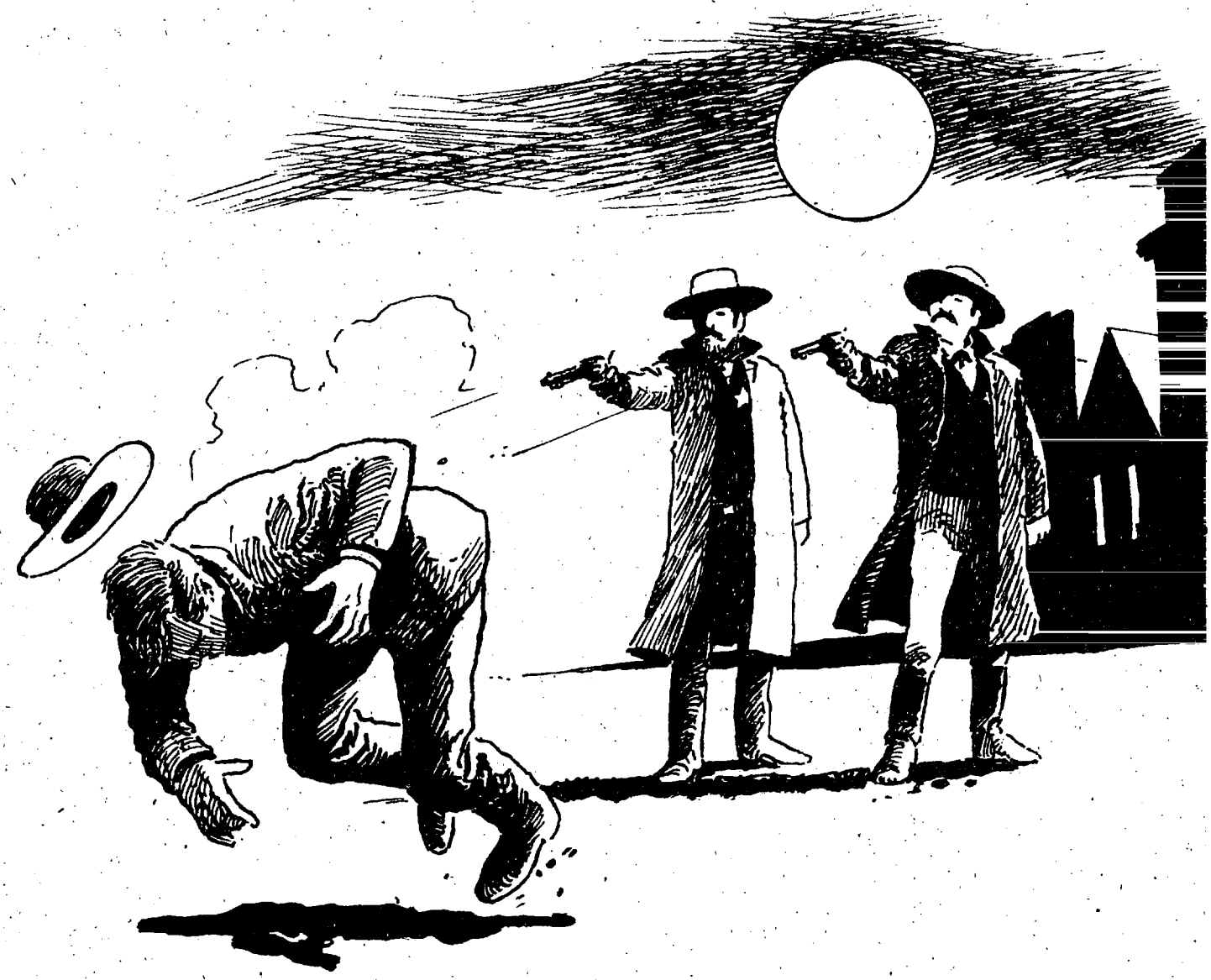
clothes....Lottie remained in her room as the hack carrying the remains was driven out to the cemetery...."

Soon afterward, the mysterious red-headed lady gambler disappeared from Fort Griffin. She left with nothing more than the clothes she wore. No one saw her walk a mile or so out of town where she caught the Fort Concho stage. When she failed to show up at her faro table in the Bee Hive, Shanssey and the sheriff investigated. In her cabin they found a note on the bed: "Sell this outfit and give the money to someone in need of assistance."

Lottie Deno was seen no more in the Texas boom camps. She went to New Mexico, reunited with a former admirer, San Antonio gambler Frank Thurmond, and partnered with him in gambling operations at Kingston and Silver City. In 1880

According to Henry Herron, John Shanssey ordered the execution of Golden and paid the officers $250 for the job. But if Shanssey thought the elimination of Golden would guarantee Lottie's eternal devotion to him, he was badly mistaken.



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the two were married at Silver City and from that time on she was known as Charlotte Thurmond. The husband and wife gambling team so impressed writer Alfred Henry Lewis that, renaming them "Cherokee Hall" and "Faro Nell," he used them as recurrent characters in his widely popular *Wolfville Tales* published twenty years later.

Fort Griffin lost its excitement for John Shanssey after the departure of Lottie Deno. Finally, he disposed of his businesses in the town and moved on. The Fort Griffin *Echo* announced on January 4, 1879, that "John Shanssey has moved to Palo Pinto where he will open a first class saloon. Shaney is a gentleman and a good man and we wish him success in his new location." Ads soon began appearing in the *Echo*: CATTLE EXCHANGE. JOHN SHANSSEY, PROPRIETOR. PALO PINTO, TEXAS.

No boom camp held him long, however. In 1880 he moved his saloon from Palo Pinto to the new Texas and Pacific Railroad town of Gordon, and by the end of that year he had relocated again, this time at Abilene.

It was in Shanssey's gambling rooms at Abilene that a nineteen-year-old Texas Ranger named Jeff Milton, who was destined to achieve fame as a lawman in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, first met the gambler. Young Milton approached the faro layout and produced a dollar. "Where do you want it played?" Shanssey asked. When Milton said he did not know, Shanssey looked at him closely. "Haven't you ever played before?" When Milton replied that he had not, Shanssey pushed the dollar away, saying: "Well, then, you can't play here."

In May 1881, Milton killed a man in a gunfight at Colorado City, and Shanssey, who had again relocated, helped make bond for the young Ranger.

A couple of months before, Shanssey had been back in Fort Griffin, attending a stock convention there. G.W. Robson, editor of the *Echo* marked his visit:

> The round face and rotund body of John Shanssey made its appearance on our streets yesterday. Shaney and family are now residents of the thriving village of Colorado where he will open a first class hotel....

It appears that the "family" of Shanssey consisted entirely of Nell St. Clair, a sporting woman of some notoriety who had been his consort since Lottie Deno had vanished. She and Shanssey lived together as a married couple in the Texas boom towns. Old buffalo hunter J. Wright Mooar, for one, never liked her. "I knew all about Nell St. Clair," he told an interviewer many years later. "I didn't used to like to meet her in Colorado City, and would rather walk across the street. She had half a dozen men killed, maybe more. She was a married woman at Colorado City and went to church...."

According to Mooar, Nell remained with Shanssey throughout the decade of the 1880s and into the 1890s, as he moved from one lively frontier town to another and was still with him when he finally settled down at Yuma, Arizona. There he operated a number of saloons and became involved in local Democratic politics. Perhaps Nell's notoriety proved a drawback to his political ambitions; at any rate Shanssey and his paramour finally split up sometime around the turn of the century.

He served as an alderman at Yuma and in 1899 was elected to the first of three terms as mayor. On June 22, 1904, at the age of fifty-four, he married Catherine O'Connor, a respectable woman, remembered by one old-timer as "very quiet," in marked contrast to Nell St. Clair. The marriage produced no children. Shanssey himself, this early Yuma resident recalled, was a "jovial, outgoing man who was very well liked in Yuma. He was constantly out in his horse and buggy, checking out what was happening...." Shanssey served terms as mayor from 1899-1901, 1904-1906, and 1908-1910. He was also on the board of aldermen for many years. After leaving the mayor's office in 1910 he became a Yuma County supervisor. He was still serving in this capacity when a "complication of ailments," probably brought on by diabetes, incapacitated him in 1917. Gangrene developed in his leg and he was taken to the Clara Barton Hospital in Los Angeles, California, where he died on August 21, 1917. His body was returned to Yuma and funeral services were held on August 24, at a Catholic church. Burial in the Yuma cemetery was presided over by the Order of Elks. In tribute to Shanssey, the county courthouse was closed during the ceremony.

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TRUE WEST LEGENDS:

Courtesy of Robert Cunningham

A group of early-day lawmen posed at Guthrie, Oklahoma Territory. Jim Masterson is fourth from the left, holding his hat in the air.

Jim Masterson

By R.K. DeArment

September 16, 1855—James P. Masterson is born in the parish of St. Georges, Iberville County, Canada, the third child of Thomas and Catherine Masterson. Older brothers are Edward J. and Bartholomew "Bat." Four younger siblings later join the family, but it is the three eldest Masterson boys who are destined to achieve fame as western frontier lawmen.

Fall 1872—Seventeen-year-old Jim Masterson leaves his parents' farm in Sedgwick County, Kansas, to join brothers Ed and Bat on the buffalo ranges near Dodge City.

February 23, 1878—The Dodge City *Times* notes the return of Jim to the town after a buffalo hunt of almost four months. Bat Masterson is now sheriff of Ford County and Ed is city marshal of Dodge. Bat appoints Jim a deputy sheriff and three Mastersons now wear the star in the famed Kansas cowtown.

June 1, 1878—After the killing of Ed Masterson in April by drunken cowboys, Jim pins on another badge, accepting appointment as policeman under the new city marshal, Charlie Bassett.

July 26, 1878—In the early hours of the morning George Hoy, a carousing cowboy, fires his pistol into Dodge's Comique Theater, scattering performers and customers. Deputy City Marshal Wyatt Earp and Officer Jim Masterson open up and drop Hoy from the saddle as he gallops out of town. The cowboy's arm is shattered and he dies from the wound a month later.

November 4, 1879—After the resignation of Charlie Bassett, Jim is promoted to the position of Dodge City marshal.

April 6, 1881—An administration change in Dodge City costs Jim his marshal's job. He has a financial interest in the Lady Gay Saloon, but he and his partner, A.J. Peacock, have a bitter disagreement over Peacock's hiring of his brother-in-law, Al Updegraph, as bartender in the establishment. The dispute leads to a shooting scrape between Jim and Updegraph in which no one is injured, but the town is full of rumors of threats on Jim's life. Someone telegraphs Bat in Tombstone, Arizona, that a second Masterson brother is about to be murdered in Dodge.

April 16, 1881—Bat arrives in Dodge and is confronted at the train station by Peacock and Updegraph,

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Jim Masterson

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True West Legends:

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While breaking up a fight, he strikes an unruly miner in the face with his six-shooter, and is accused of bru-
he charges are dismissed after a hearing.

1882—Bat Masterson is appointed city marshal at Trinidad, and discharges Jim, with whom he has had a
ut. Jim immediately accepts a job as deputy under Las Animas County Sheriff Juan Vigil at Trinidad. Jim and
terson reside and enforce the law in the same town, but are never again close.

ary 23, 1885—Jim is appointed undersheriff of Colfax County, New Mexico, at Raton, some twenty miles
f Trinidad. Sheriff John Hixenbaugh, his boss, is incapacitated, having been severely wounded in a gunfight
nths earlier with outlaw Dick Rogers. He would eventually lose his leg.

ary 30, 1885—The Rogers gang attacks Jim in a Raton dancehall, pistol-whipping him and making him dance
bullets rip the floor at his feet.

uary 18, 1885—Jim is appointed captain of Company H, New Mexico Territorial Militia, by Governor Lionel
don, who also puts a reward of one thousand dollars on the head of Dick Rogers. Masterson begins a vigor-
paign to round up associates and supporters of Rogers.

uary 25, 1885—Masterson's militia company is disbanded when citizens protest the captain's aggressive tac-
e company's rifles and ammunition are confiscated.

uary 28, 1885—Dick Rogers surrenders to other authorities on condition he will be protected from Master-
l the Raton officers and is released on $1,000 bond.

h 2, 1885—Masterson and his militiamen are arrested by a vigilance committee and held overnight. The vigi-
ote to expel them from New Mexico. Under a guard led by Dick Rogers they are marched up Raton Pass to
orado line and ordered to keep walking. The banished band are thereafter remembered as "Masterson's
Militia."

ary 12, 1889—Jim Masterson is one of a group of Dodge City gunmen who raid the courthouse at Cimarron,
to capture the Gray County records and take them to Ingalls, a rival town contending for the county seat.
Cimarron citizens resist, a gun battle erupts in which one man is killed and several wounded. Jim and three
ngalls gunmen are besieged in the courthouse for six hours. They are later tried and acquitted for the mur-
he Cimarron citizen.

l 22, 1889—Jim makes the run from Arkansas City, Kansas, into the Unassigned Lands of Indian Territory,
iles in Guthrie.

ember 1, 1893—As a deputy United States marshal of Oklahoma Territory, Masterson participates in the cele-
gun battle at Ingalls in which three deputies are killed and Bill Doolin and most of his gang make a dramatic

ch 31, 1895—Jim Masterson dies at Guthrie of "quick consumption." His body is taken to Wichita, Kansas, to
rred in the family plot in Highland Cemetery.

What to Read:

Bat Masterson: The Man and the Legend, by Robert K. DeArment.
University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1979.

Great Gunfighters of the Kansas Cowtowns, 1867-1886, by Nyle H. Miller and Joseph W. Snell.
University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1967.

Incident on the Red River, and Other True Stories of New Mexico, by Steve Peters.
Privately printed, Santa Fe, 1971.

Gunfight at Ingalls: Death of an Outlaw Town, by Glenn Shirley.
Barbed Wire Press, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1990.

Where to Go:

City, Kansas, where the Masterson brothers first became lawmen, continues to celebrate its frontier renown
"Queen of Cowtowns."

aton, New Mexico, where Jim Masterson was humiliated by outlaw Dick Rogers, one can drive north twenty
o **Trinidad, Colorado**, where Jim and Bat Masterson both wore stars. In crossing Raton Pass on Interstate 25
l cover the same ground Jim Masterson's "walking militia" laboriously climbed at gunpoint in 1885.

, Oklahoma, is little changed from the days when it was the territorial capital, and many of the old buildings
nted by Jim Masterson and other celebrated deputy U.S. marshals who headquartered there remain.
is now a ghost town, but you can walk the ground where the Doolin gang and the federal marshals battled.

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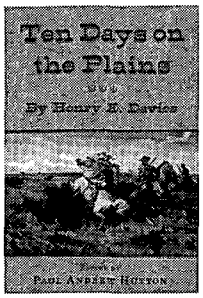

235—TEN DAYS ON THE PLAINS. *By Henry E. Davies; ed. by Paul Andrew Hutton.* Originally published in a limited edition in 1871, this well-illustrated and produced book is an account by Civil War General Henry Davies of a spectacular hunting expedition on the high western plains. Davies features a young scout, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, as the central figure in the story of the expedition. 194p. Southern Methodist University Press.
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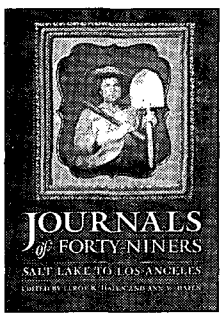

727—JOURNALS OF FORTY-NINERS: SALT LAKE TO LOS ANGELES. *Edited by LeRoy R. Hafen & Ann W. Hafen.* The Hafens have assembled a fascinating array of diaries and memoirs of forty-niners who set out from Salt Lake City toward California's goldfields over the Old Spanish Trail. For many would-be gold miners, this dry, dangerous trail was preferable to crossing the Sierra Nevada. In reality, the choice of the southern route did not ease travelers' efforts. The narratives herein provide fine descriptions of these challenges. "...a prized addition to our knowledge..."—*American Historical Review.* 336p. University of Nebraska Press.
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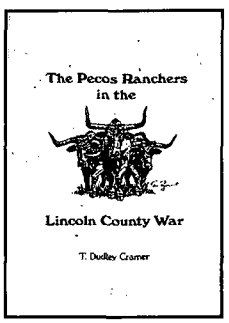

706—THE PECOS RANCHERS IN THE LINCOLN COUNTY WAR. *By T. Dudley Cramer.* Focusing on the Beckwith family, Cramer shares the story of the small ranchers from the Pecos Valley who played a prominent, often misinterpreted role in the Lincoln County War in New Mexico Territory. With rare exception these largely hard-working cattlemen and cowboys sided with the Murphy-Dolan-Riley partisans, believing strongly that the opposing forces of Tunstall-McSween and John Chisum were trying to oust them from the Pecos country. Cramer offers many rare, previously unpublished photos in this important history. 215p. Branding Iron Press.
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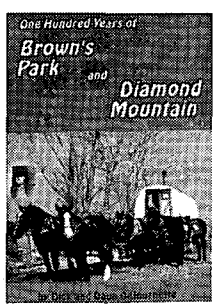

665—ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF BROWN'S PARK AND DIAMOND MOUNTAIN. *By Dick and Daun DeJournette.* The DeJournette family has resided in Brown's Park, home of the infamous Brown's Hole, since 1895, the year that Dick's father, Ford, arrived as a young cowboy. Ford became acquainted with and befriended many of the area's most well-known characters, such as Harry Tracy, Butch Cassidy, and David Lant. This book is an account of the DeJournette family's life as well as a revealing history of the famous region in which they settled and lived. 476p. DeJournette Enterprises.
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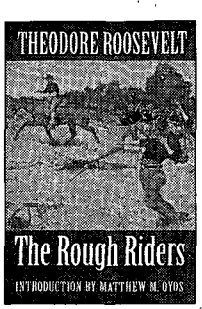

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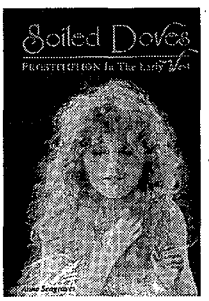

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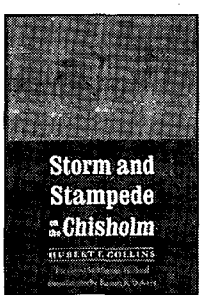

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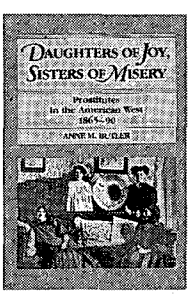

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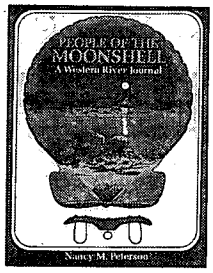

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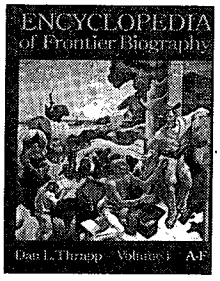

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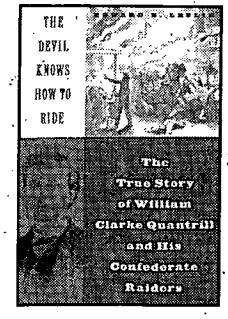

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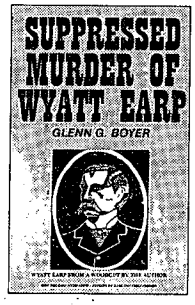

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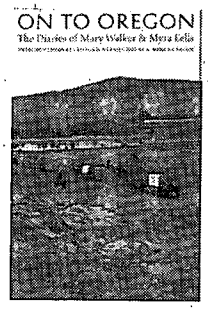

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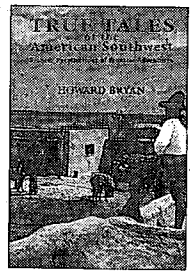

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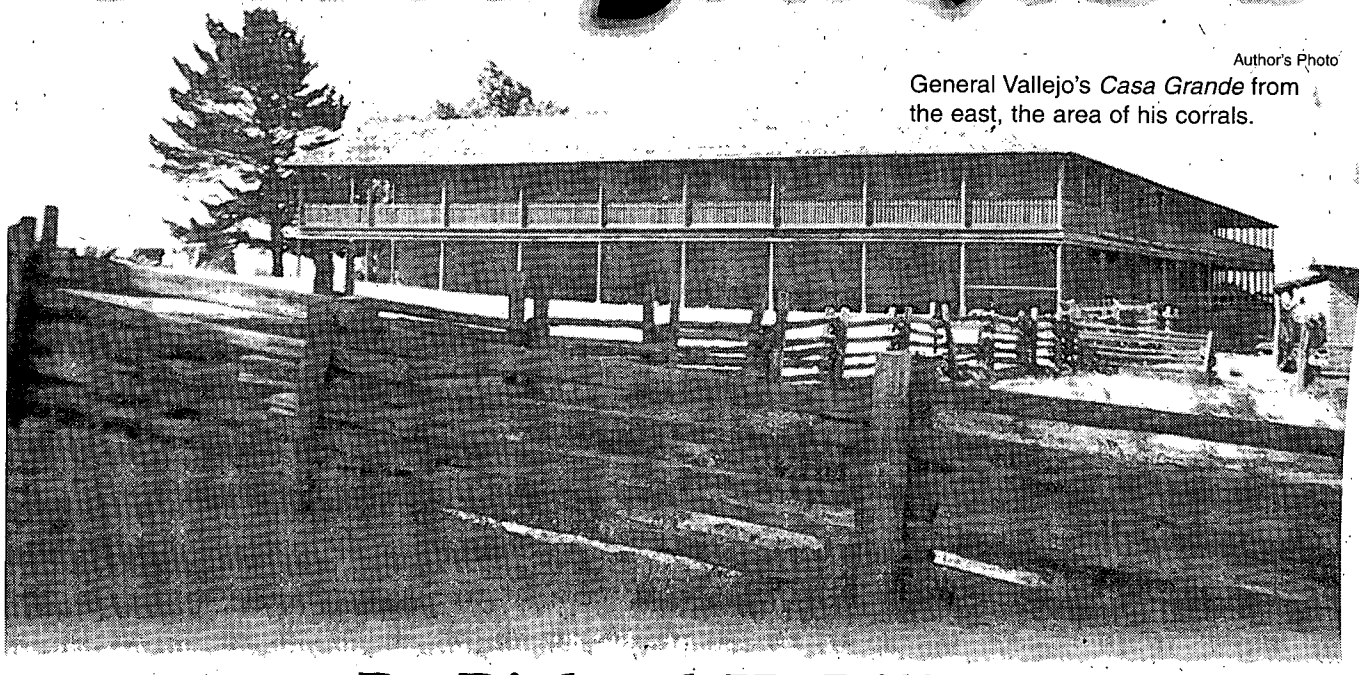

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General Vallejo's *Casa Grande* from the east, the area of his corrals.

By Richard H. Dillon

How in the world did Mexico retain California, especially the critical San Francisco Bay area, in the stormy decade preceding the outbreak of the Mexican War in 1846? Well, it was not easy.

Alta California, as the province was officially called in order to distinguish it from Baja California, was not only exposed on the north to hostile Indians, it was scouted by agents of Britain and France; frightened by an illegal Russian colony on the Redwood Coast from 1812 to 1841; and threatened by American intruders. These trespassers ranged from sailors who "jumped ship" in the Bay to rambunctious and well-armed fur trappers from the Rockies and Southwest, plus emigrant settlers, without Mexican visas, from the East and Midwest.

As early as 1831-33, Governor José Figueroa tried to protect his northern border. However, his plan of fortified *ranchos* at Santa Rosa and Petaluma failed. A turning point came in 1834 when Figueroa got help from a subordinate who was already becoming his "right hand." The governor chose well. The one man in all California who was capable of mounting a defense with the skimpy resources of men, munitions, and supplies at his disposal was Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo. The progressive, well-read Vallejo was easily the most remarkable man in the history of Mexican California. He would dominate almost the entire period of Mexican hegemony, 1822-1846.

H.H. Bancroft called Vallejo "the noblest Californian of them all." The historian praised him for his seemingly unique zeal and energy in an indolent Hispanic province, commending him particularly for his Indian policy. Vallejo kept hostile tribes in check with a mix of war and diplomacy, of firmness balanced with fairness. The Petaluma Adobe, or *Casa Grande*, was one key to his military success.

Vallejo, who preferred to be called Don Guadalupe, was a military prodigy.

Born in Monterey in 1808, he was a cadet in that provincial capital's garrison when he was only fifteen. By 1827, he was an *alférez*, an army ensign, and at twenty-one commanded the detachment that put down the serious Indian uprising of Chief Estanislao (Stanislaus). The career army officer (and, shortly, ranchero) became a politician, too, when he was named to the legislative *Diputación* in 1830.

In 1834, Figueroa chose Vallejo to take complete charge of the *Frontera del Norte*, California's entire Northern Frontier, as well as to be *Comisionado*, commissioner of Sonoma's secularized Mission San Francisco Solano. All twenty-one missions were made secular, taken away from Franciscan priests and, ostensibly, given to their wards. The padre's religious duties were to be

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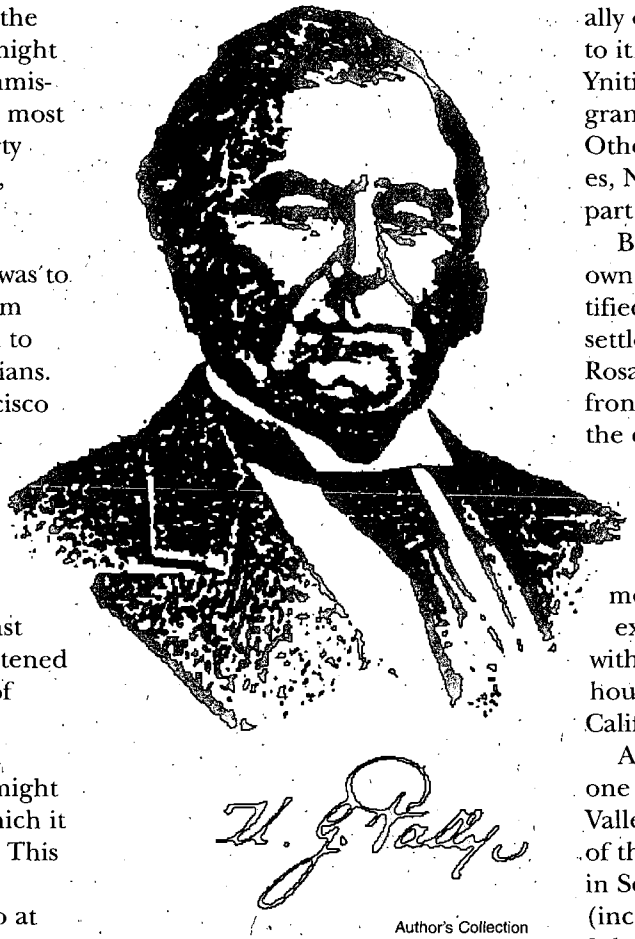
continued by parish priests in the mission chapels. However, as might be expected, the Mexican commissioners actually ended up with most of the Mission Indians' property and herds. Vallejo was, at least, more honest than most of the administrators.

The general's main charge was to prevent Russian expansion from Fort Ross and Bodega Bay and to pacify the region's warlike Indians. Warriors had raided San Francisco Solano in 1831 and San Rafael in 1832, as well as attacking peaceful Indians who were friendly to the authorities. Vallejo later recalled: "My first object was to make an uninterrupted campaign against the tribes of savages that threatened our borders, for the purpose of destroying some and making friends of others; with especial attention to the chiefs, that I might use them later in this work, which it was so necessary to undertake. This gave me the results I desired."

In command of the Presidio at San Francisco, Vallejo begged, demanded, and appealed, mostly in vain, for reinforcements and supplies for his absurdly small force of troopers. He had only forty to fifty cavalrymen under his command in a ruinous fort. He complained to his superiors of his soldiers' hunger and ragged uniforms, and their lack of pay, in arrears for years. He ended up supporting the only military presence in northern California largely out of his own pocket.

Instead of beefing up the fortress on the Golden Gate, the financially strapped governor ordered Vallejo to transfer his little command from the Presidio to the more-threatened Northern Frontier in 1835. He was to found a new presidio, or military post, at Sonoma, adjacent to Mission San Francisco Solano.

In 1836, Juan B. Alvarado, Vallejo's nephew, became governor after another of California's many revolutions. He not only confirmed his uncle as commanding officer of the army post, commander of the frontier, and director of Colonization, he suddenly promoted him to



Author's Collection

General Guadalupe Vallejo.

Comandante General. Don Guadalupe was now commanding general for all of California.

Still without adequate soldiers, General Vallejo began to cobble together a makeshift, yet effective, defensive line of missions, *ranchos*, and colonies that, to everyone's surprise, shielded San Francisco Bay from harm and kept the peace on the border for a decade. Vallejo was so irreligious that he was considered by the padres to be a Mason, if not a heretic. He was almost *persona non grata* to them. Nevertheless, he anchored his defense line on the West at Mission San Rafael. He had small success with colonies, attracting only twenty-five families of settlers to the frontier by 1839. But he connected the mission to Rancho Olompali, settled circa 1834 by Chief Camilo Ynitia of the Coast Miwok Indians. Camilo was just about the only individual whom Monterey regarded as an industrious and successful Indian rancher and farmer. He became a strong ally of the general and Vallejo saw to it that the governor awarded Ynitia one of the very few land-grant *ranchos* ever given to Indians. Other minor Marin County ranches, Novato and Nicasio, were also part of Vallejo's strategic plan.

Beyond Olompali lay Vallejo's own Rancho Petaluma, with its fortified *Casa Grande*, and he also got a settlement going at nearby Santa Rosa. The strongpoint of the whole front was the pueblo of Sonoma in the center, the general's garrison town alongside Mission San Francisco Solano. To the east lay Napa Valley, controlled by the general's most dependable Americano ally, ex-mountain man George Yount, with his Kentucky-style log blockhouse, the only one in all California.

Also in Napa Valley was Suscol, one of several headquarters for Vallejo's strongest ally, Chief Solano of the Suisun Indians. He was often in Sonoma to join the general or (increasingly) his brother, Captain Salvador Vallejo, on punitive expeditions or preemptive strikes against hostiles. Solano held the right wing of Vallejo's defenses at his old home, the Suisun Valley, until 1839. In that year, Captain John Sutter established *Nueva Helvetia* or New Switzerland. His Sutter's Fort on the American River near its junction with the Sacramento River finally anchored Vallejo's *Frontera del Norte* in the Sacramento Valley, although Sutter was an uneasy ally. The Swiss adventurer was jealous and suspicious of Vallejo, whom he saw as a rival for power. The two men did not become close friends until both were mistreated by John Frémont and the Bear Flag filibusters in 1846.

Don Guadalupe did not actually reside at his home ranch, Petaluma's *Casa Grande*, but at his military headquarters on the Sonoma plaza. He put a trusted *mayordomo*, foreman, in charge of Rancho Petaluma and this surrogate lived in the great adobe ranch house. Vallejo lived in another *casa grande*, at Sonoma, his *cuartel general* or mil-

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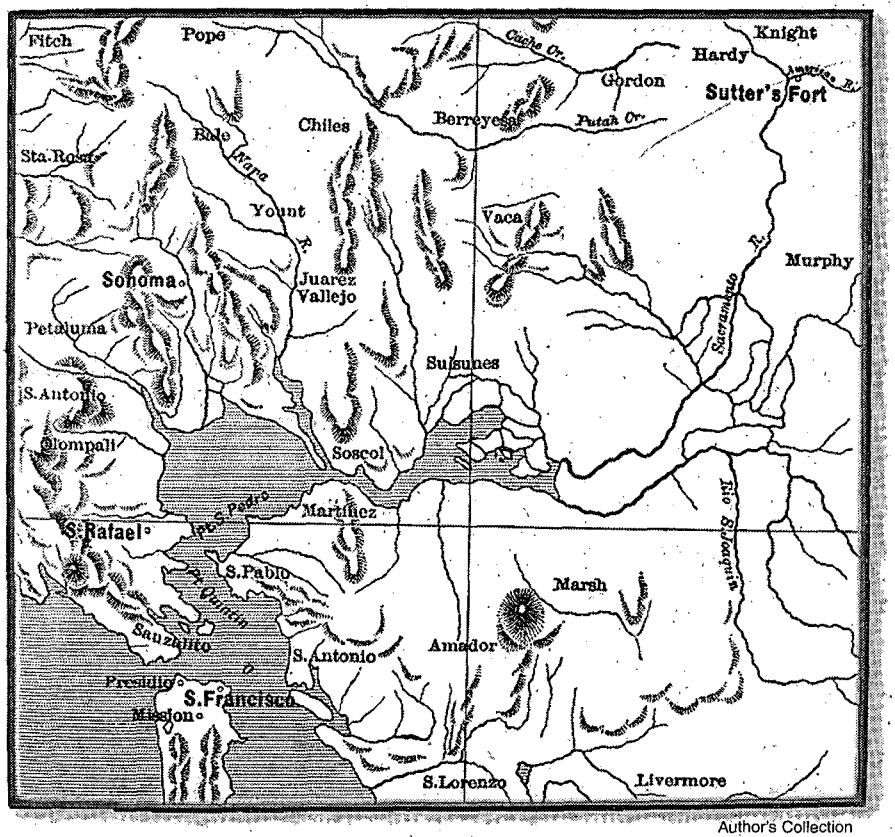
itary headquarters. It had not only a barracks for his cavalry, but a *torreón*, or military watch tower. It was unique in California though common in Mexico (hence the city of Torreón) and was found, occasionally, in New Mexico. The troopers were poorly armed with *escopetas*, muskets, but they were among the best horsemen in the world and, surely, the only ones who made deadly weapons of their *reatas*, or lariats, lassoing and dragging to death enemy warriors as well as grizzly bears. Thanks to these tough troopers and Solano's numerous Suisun Indian auxiliaries, Vallejo was able to keep the peace.



Author's Collection

General M.G. Vallejo's Northern Frontier, with Petaluma's *Casa Grande* a key component, ran from San Rafael to Sonoma to Napa Valley, to end in Suisun Valley until Sutter's Fort was founded.

Petaluma's *Casa Grande*, begun in April 1836, was not just, literally, a big house. It was a "great house," a mansion. It was of two stories, rare in old California, with wide verandas, the upper porches supported by strong redwood beams. Vallejo could not make enough nails in his blacksmith shop, so he used wooden pegs in doorways, window casings, and light interior woodwork, while lashing beams in place with strips of California's ubiquitous rawhide.

Thanks to its sprawling size and its massive, plastered and whitewashed walls, twenty feet high and almost three feet thick, the *Casa* was practically a palace by California standards. Indeed, it was called *El Palacio* by Californians, and one visitor, Charles "Philosopher" Pickett, dubbed it the Adobe Castle in 1846. To writer Bayard Taylor, a decade later, it was the Adobe Fort. Other Americans termed it Fort Vallejo: It took an army of Indian laborers between four and ten years to build it, and it was never really finished in terms of Vallejo's grandiose plan. Captain Salvador Vallejo, who supervised construction in his brother's absence, said that it cost $80,000 in labor and materials. Of course, the Vallejos had little real money and paid the Indians in food and goods, mostly clothing.

The structure was originally a four-sided building forming a compound with a courtyard in the middle. However, one section of the quadrangle melted away as unroofed adobe walls were exposed to the relentless rains of many Sonoma County winters. The part of the building that survives today is enormous, its longest wings 177 feet and the shorter 145 feet. It is still California's largest adobe.

The *Casa Grande* is a fortified ranch house. Its doorways originally contained wickets in addition to sturdy, protective doors, and the windows were grilled with iron bars and fitted with shutters. Instead of a costly and labor-intensive roof of kiln-fired tiles, the general initially roofed it with thatch, using local bulrushes. But he soon thought better of this invitation to arson by Indian marauders and had Dutch George Yount shingle the ranch house with redwood shakes. Vallejo also cleared the grassy knoll of liveoaks near the building so that its occupants could spot strangers approaching when still at a distance. And if the latter meant trouble, the *Casa*'s defenders would have a good field of fire with their muskets.

There are pines near the building today, but they were added after Vallejo's time, like the well in the great patio. The general had no use for a *pozo*, or well. He depended on the perennial, nearby, trout stream of Arroyo Lema, now called Adobe Creek.

The ranch house is officially the Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park today, open to the public daily from 10 AM to 5 PM. It is also State Registered Landmark No. 18 and, deservedly, has been a National Historic Landmark since 1971. The house was built on a hill commanding a long, gentle slope to Petaluma Creek about four miles from its head of navigation. There the town of Petaluma was laid out by Americans. Vallejo's *embarcadero*, or landing, was downstream because oceangoing schooners might ground at low or minus tides since lower Petaluma Creek (now, technically, Petaluma River) is a shallow tidal slough off San Pablo Bay, an extension of San Francisco Bay. The general's *embarcadero* was near the sites of later Lakeville and Donahue

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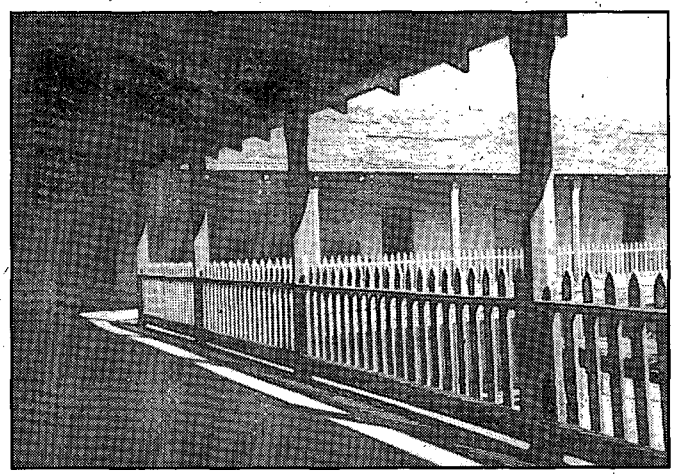
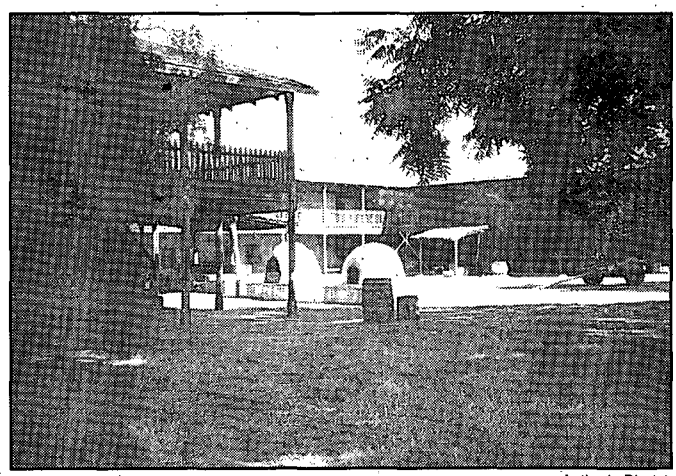


Author's Photo

A shady veranda on the ranch house's upper floor.



Author's Photo

Courtyard with kivas.

Landing, both ghost towns today.

Since Vallejo was usually at his desk in Sonoma or campaigning in the field, Rancho Petaluma was run by a trusted Mexican (*Californio*) *majordomo*. We know the name of one such foreman, Miguel Alvarado. But in the summer, the general spent time at Petaluma with his large family. There he also entertained ships' captains and other distinguished visitors. He enjoyed showing his Yankee touches—fireplaces and real glass windowpanes in his upstairs apartment-sitting room and the downstairs dining room. He also kept a fancy chair and chest brought from the Orient. The thick "mud" walls kept the Palacio as cool in summer as it was cozy-warm in winter. He had door and window frames angled to offer good views of the outdoors and to let in maximum daylight in winter.

The ranch stretched from Petaluma Creek eastward across the Sonoma Mountains to Sonoma Creek. It was not measured in *hectareas*, or acres, but in miles. Governor Figueroa awarded him ten Spanish leagues (44,280 acres) in 1834 and Governor Manuel Micheltorena added another five by 1844. Most of the property was rolling grassland, dotted with liveoaks. Bay trees and willows lined creeks like the Arroyo Lema. Already, the hills were becoming covered with a tall, lush growth of wild oats, the nonnative grass that was running wild and taking over from indigenous bunch grass.

Vallejo was both the largest landholder and biggest cattlemen in California. Captain William Heath Davis's figures may have been exaggerated guesses, for the *hapa haole* (half-Hawaiian) was a sea captain, not an experienced ranchero. But Kanaka Bill estimated that his friend ran 25,000 cattle on his three ranches, Petaluma, Temblec, and Suscol, and 6-8,000 horses. Probably 12,000 longhorns roamed his Petaluma spread, bearing his brand of a double spade with a simplified fleur-de-lis. Vallejo also raised oxen and mules, goats, swine, and poultry. He had 3,000 sheep at Petaluma and sent the Irish *alcalde* of San Rafael, Don Timoteo Murphy, to England to purchase pure-bred animals to improve his flocks.

The Indians built two adobe-walled corrals, one for a holding pen and the other, larger one for his annual *matanza*, or slaughter. The Hawaiian-Californian skipper Davis claimed that his amigo branded, ear marked, and castrated 10,000 young steers every year, around March 1. Vallejo's *rodeos*, or roundups, whether for branding or for slaughtering in the big corral, called *Las Calaveras* (The Skulls), always ended up at the Petaluma *rancho*. In June or July, according to Davis, the general killed one-fourth of his stock for hides and tallow, virtually California's only exports. Much of the meat had to be wasted for lack of refrigeration, but fresh beef was fed to laborers and soldiers, and Indian women made sun-dried *charqui* (jerky) and salted some beef, as well as fish. Thanks to the Vallejos, famines became a thing of the past to local Indians, along with attacks on their *rancheriás* by warlike tribes.

The Petaluma Adobe was much more than just a big ranch house. It was a real hacienda, a western plantation, a self-contained ranching, farming, and even minor manufacturing community. No wonder that Captain Sutter patterned Sutter's Fort after it, and historian James D. Hart aptly likened Vallejo's estate to a European feudal barony. The general employed around 600 Mission Indians as *vaqueros*, farm laborers, ranch hands, and artisans. Most of them were from a *rancheriá* at nearby Laguna de Tolay. (Lake Tolay was drained in 1859 and the bottom reclaimed as farm land.)

The Tolay Indians moved to tule huts alongside Arroyo Lema. Many had been taught skills by the Franciscans at Mission San Rafael or Mission San Francisco Solano. They knew how to plow, sow, harrow, and harvest grain. The general also hired gentiles, whom Americans called wild Indians or savages. These uncivilized natives worked under the tutelage of Mission Indians when more farm hands were needed in harvest time. Even so, Vallejo may have had a labor shortage because of devastating epidemics in 1833 (malaria) and 1839 (smallpox), the former brought by Hudson's Bay Company trappers and the latter by the

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Russians of Fort Ross.

Farming was primitive but extensive. Crude wooden plows, each towed by a yoke of oxen, had no metal plowshares, or blades. They cultivated only a few inches into the earth. But the virgin soil was so rich that, when plowed and re-plowed, cereal crops were huge. The exact yield in *fanegas*, the Spanish grain measure (133 pounds per *fanega*), is not recorded for Petaluma, but at Mission San Jose, just east of San Francisco Bay, 100 fanegas of wheat were harvested for every single fanega of seed wheat sown.

The general sold wheat to the Russians. Their schooners took the grain from Petaluma Creek all the way to Sitka to feed the czar's always-hungry Alaskan colonists. Vallejo hauled his grain down to the *embarcadero*, just as he did his cowhides, in the clumsy carts that he also used to secure lumber from redwood groves. A replica of one of the *carretas* is parked in the courtyard today. None of these carts had bona fide wheels, only two wobbly tree-rounds. Truly wheeled vehicles, with spokes, proper axles, and metal rims, would only arrive with early American emigrants.

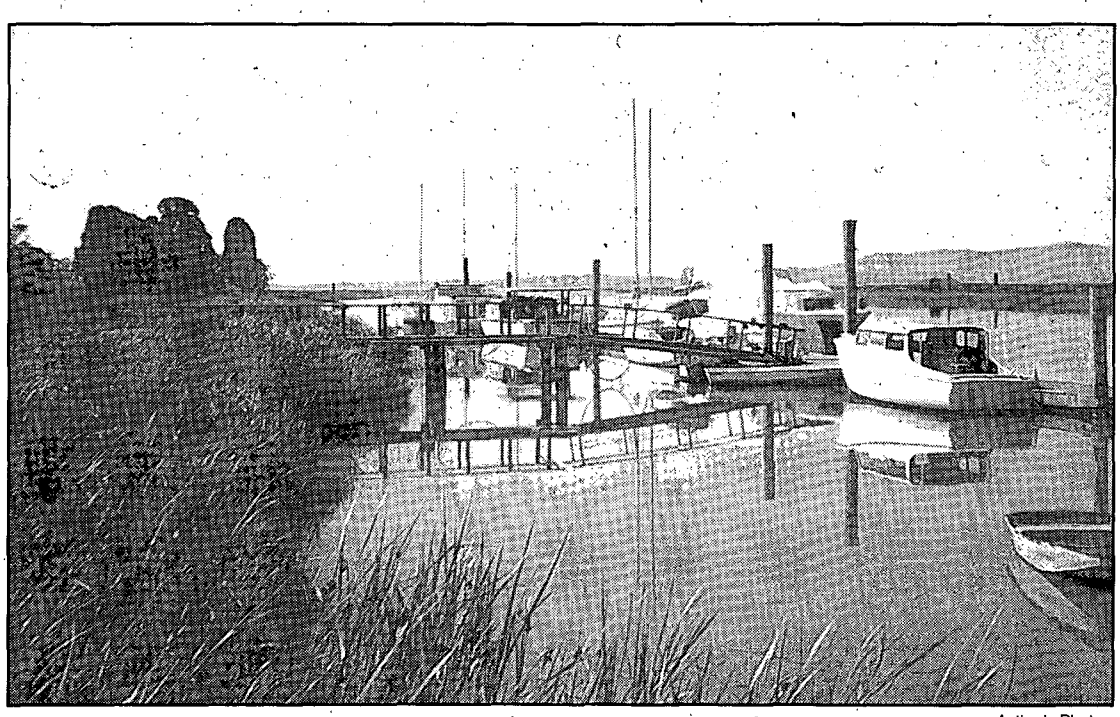
Of course, Don Guadalupe reserved a lot of flour for tortillas and bread for his *vaqueros*, laborers, and soldiers. He had several primitive grist mills at the ranch, each powered by a horse goaded by an Indian boy wielding a cowhide whip. Today, a pair of whitewashed *hornos*, beehive-shaped outdoor ovens for baking bread, is located across the great patio, or courtyard, from the *carreta*.

The general fancied himself a genuine *hacendado* as well as a ranchero. He was fond of riding about to personally inspect and supervise not just the planting and harvesting of his great fields of wheat, barley, and oats, but also the tending of his kitchen crops—corn, beans, onions, peas, potatoes, garbanzos, lentils, *sandias* (watermelons), squash, and pumpkins. Ristras of bright red peppers were hung to dry, as in New Mexico. Vallejo also transferred wine-grape vines from San Rafael to Petaluma. The first Mission Grape vines in Napa Valley, America's premier Wine Country today, were gifts from the Don to George Yount, either from Petaluma or Sonoma.

Initially, the Indians' skills were limited to hunting, fishing, and gleaning such food as acorns, berries, and roots. Their one real art was basketry. But Vallejo soon gave them what amounted to a trade school education beyond basket-making. Apprentices were taught many new skills besides farming and animal husbandry. The brothers, like Captain Sutter, used *kanakas* (Sandwich Islanders) as artisans and as supervisors of the Indians. They also hand-hewed timber into the planks and beams of the *Casa Grande*.

But it was the Indians who wove blankets and rugs, or made stockings, from wool that they clipped from big flocks of sheep. Others manufactured soap, candles, saddle trees, saddles, bridles, and boots and shoes, or worked in the tannery itself. Still others worked in the carpenter's shop or made horseshoes, spurs, tools, and handmade nails in the smithy. Indians, of course, prepared the deerskins and cowhides, and tallow, for hide droghers like Richard Henry Dana's vessel in *Two Years Before the Mast*.

A few cowhides dry on a rack behind the *Casa* today as a reminder of the ranch's old trade with New England, and an old, black iron, tallow-rendering kettle is in the courtyard. Originally it was a trying-out pot for blubber aboard a whaleship laid up at San Francisco or Sausalito.



Author's Photo

General Vallejo's *embarcadero* on Petaluma Creek was located near the ghost port of Lakeville.

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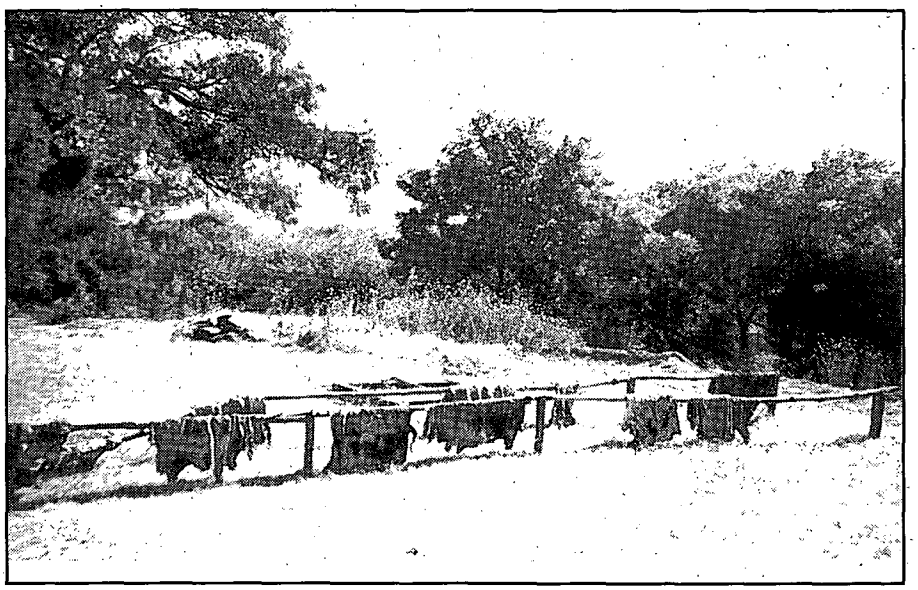

Author's Photo

Cowhides drying alongside old Arroyo Lema, now Adobe Creek.

The residents of the *Casa Grande* never had to fire a shot in anger, for the building and its hardworking "garrison" awed bands of Sotoyomes and other hostile Guapos (Wappo Indians) as well as Russians. The belligerent natives, holed up in the mountains, raided Indian and Mexican settlements alike. But they never dared attack Don Guadalupe's ranching fortress. Neither did the so-called Horsethief Indians, Moquelumnes, from the Sacramento Valley and distant Sierra foothills, although they raided as far west as Napa Valley. The Petaluma Adobe was never besieged and was raided only during the Mexican War, when the general and Captain Salvador were prisoners in Sutter's Fort.

Military and naval officers of Britain, France, and the United States were poking around California in 1841. Navy Lieutenant Charles Wilkes predicted that "Zonoma" would become California's capital, provided that Vallejo continued in power and lived long enough to build up the little pueblo. Vallejo lived to a ripe old age, all right; he died at eighty-two in 1890. But, by 1841, he was becoming tired, disillusioned, and sometimes ill. He not only delegated command of his expeditions to his brother, a brutal Indian fighter, he also turned over his Sonoma post to Don Salvador. The captain's force of regulars was still only forty or fifty troopers, but it was backed by sixty able-bodied Sonoma militia and, of course, Solano's dependable warriors.

Around 1843 the general saw the handwriting on the wall, that California was likely to fall to a foreign power. He hoped that it would be the democratic United States. He had come to admire the republic. Near the end of 1844, the unpopular Governor Micheltorena called on Vallejo to march to his aid and quell a revolt. This was the last straw. Sick and tired of the anarchy of the province's endless, if usually bloodless, civil wars, Vallejo instead disbanded his force.

When the Mexican War broke out via the Bear Flag Revolt of June 1846, American rebels not only seized the Vallejos at Sonoma, but pillaged Rancho Petaluma. They took 900 horses, 80 mules, 1,000 cattle, 60 sheep, and the stored grain. The U.S. government later compensated the general with $61,300 for his rustling loss.

Vallejo remained an important figure in California after it passed into American hands. But he did not return to the *Casa Grande.* He built a new American-style frame home in Sonoma. He lost his Suscol ranch to litigation, but managed to hang onto Rancho Petaluma despite Yankee lawyers and squatters, clearing title to 66,622 acres.

In 1850 Vallejo leased the ranch to French settlers. He then sold off and even gave away parts of it. In 1856 the College of California, now the University of California, considered the site for a new campus. But the trustees, who planned to convert the Petaluma Adobe into seventy classrooms and offices, offered Vallejo only $20,000 for the house and 1,200 acres. When he countered by asking for $50,000 for the *Casa* and only 100 acres, it was "no deal."

In 1857 Vallejo sold the *Casa Grande* and 1,600 acres to William H. Whiteside for $25,000. The latter, in turn, sold it for $30,000 to William D. Bliss in 1859, and tenants tried to keep the *Casa* in repair. Bliss's heirs turned it and the five acres around it over to the Petaluma Parlor of the Native Sons of the Golden West in 1910. But the group was not up to the costly maintenance of the deteriorating adobe as a historical monument. It was deeded to the state in 1951.

The Division of Beaches and Parks carried on extensive restoration and the adobe, eighty-five percent of its walls and twenty percent of its timbers original, is now considered to be the finest example in existence of adobe ranch architecture. Historians as well as ordinary visitors rightly use such adjectives as "magnificent" and "superb" in describing it.

Except for the servants' quarters, Vallejo's other "great house" is long-gone from Sonoma. It burned down in 1867, along with the three-story *torreón.* And the barracks that you see there today is a modern replica. But Petaluma's *Casa Grande,* though much-restored, is the real McCoy. It is a bona fide survivor of General Vallejo's imaginative defense line along the Northern Frontier, as well as the most distinctive landmark remaining to us from California's great Hispanic ranching days.

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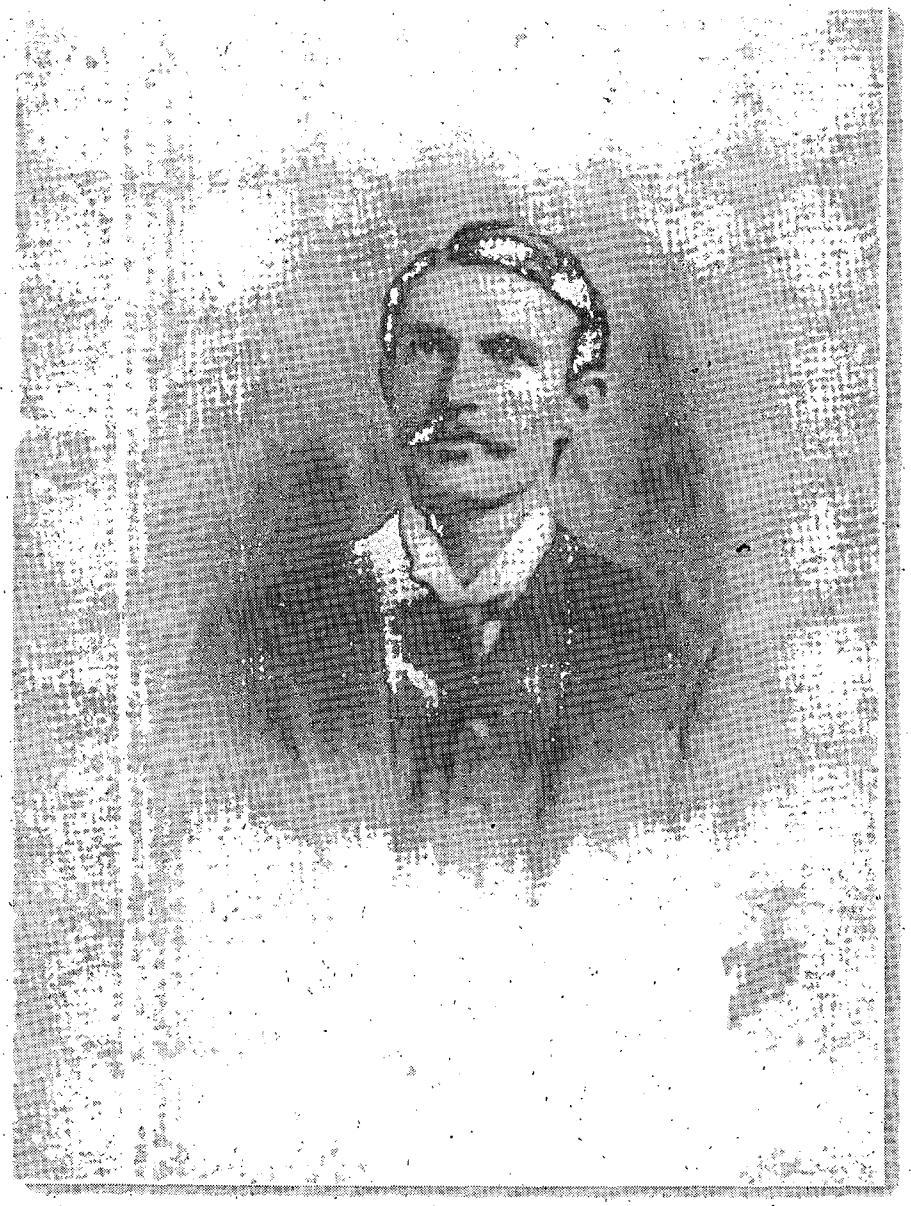
A Million Words Down the Trail:

J. MARVIN HUNTER, PIONEER PRINTER

Marvin Hunter often said of himself: "I was born with one foot in the frontier period and one in the modern." J. Marvin Hunter lived on the dying frontier of Texas, saw history as it was being made, then followed the march of time into the era of cars, planes, and modern conveniences. His heart, however, favored the foot firmly planted in the frontier period. He spent most of his lifetime preserving that frontier history for the hundreds of readers who became his faithful fans.

People were drawn to tell Marvin Hunter their stories and to give him their family relics for display in the Frontier Times Museum he built later in his life. He said he didn't collect stories and relics, they collected him. He was a "people person," who never forgot anyone he met, always remembered their names and personal histories. His writing success came from the people's trust of him "to put things down right."

It was at the small community of Loyal Valley, Texas, on March 18, 1880, that J. Marvin Hunter "first saw light." It is likely his parents had plans for the future of their first-born son as they named him after the great Methodist Divine, Bishop Marvin, hoping he would follow in the footsteps of his namesake. But Marvin Hunter developed his own brand of ministry: keeping the past alive for the knowledge and enjoyment of future generations.



Courtesy Ray Marvin and Ruth Hay

J. Marvin Hunter, from a photo taken in Clifton, Arizona, 1900. Hunter was twenty years old.

By Dot Ferguson Hatfield

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Hunter admitted he was born a wanderlust, a trait he inherited from his parents. His father, John Warren Hunter, was born in Alabama in 1816, and his mother, Mary Ann Calhoun, was born in Tennessee. Mary Ann had a splendid education, but her husband had attended school only three months in his twenty-three years. She began teaching her husband to read and write and encouraged him to earn a teaching certificate. The couple first moved to Arkansas then, in 1877, to Texas.

The Hunter family arrived in Gillespie County, Texas, with only four dollars in hard cash. John soon landed a job teaching at a one-room school on Squaw Creek. With three daughters and one son to support, John Warren Hunter frequently moved around, always looking for better opportunities.

When J. Marvin Hunter was seven years old his father took a job teaching school at beautiful Fort McKavett, Texas. It was there that Marvin saw his first man killed. It made a lasting impression on his young mind.

The man killed was John Vaden, a desperado, who reputedly ran with the Ben Bickerstaff gang. Vaden was considered a dangerous man by the Fort McKavett folks and one day when he came into the local saloon and started some trouble, the bartender, Ben Daniels, tried to reason with him. Vaden swore he was going home after his gun and would come back and kill the bartender.

Vaden's wife saw him coming toward home in a rage and knew he was going to cause trouble. She hid all the guns from him. Not finding any weapons, he returned to town, his temper on fire. There, Vaden grabbed a pole with a steel spike and hook which was used to take down articles hung from the ceiling in the store. He then began amusing himself by poking this pole into the bellies of the horses tied on the street outside.

The bartender stepped outside, thinking Vaden had stayed home, only to see Vaden lunging at him with the sharp pole. Ben Daniels stepped aside, drew his pistol, and ordered Vaden to back away. Vaden ignored the warning and lunged at the bartender. Daniels shot him down.

"I witnessed this shooting and saw Vaden fall," Hunter later wrote in his book, *The Peregrinations of a Pioneer Printer.* "Several horses, saddled, were standing at the hitching rack in front of the store. Daniels untied one of the horses, and addressing the crowd, said, 'Tell the owner of this horse I want to borrow him for a day or two. I will send him back,' and he mounted the horse and rode away. He never came back but the horse was duly returned to the owner."

Hunter added a historical update to the shooting: "In 1901 this same Ben Daniels was appointed by President Teddy Roosevelt, as United States Marshall [sic] for Arizona and New Mexico, a position he aptly filled."

In 1891, John Hunter made a career decision that charted the future of his young son. He purchased a country newspaper, *The Menardville Record,* at Menard, Texas. He put J. Marvin into the printing office, teaching him the trade. "I've been in a printing office ever since," Hunter would remark.

After publishing the *Record* for several months, John Hunter moved his printing plant to Mason, Texas, where he began printing *The Mason Herald.* This time, Hunter's father quit teaching and stayed in one place for eighteen years. He was proud at how well his young son was learning the printing trade, and he wanted to put down roots.

"I was told that many great men had started out as printer's devils, notably Ben Franklin, Horace Greeley, and even Jim Hogg [who became Governor of Texas] and naturally my boyish mind was filled with dreams of someday becoming great myself," Hunter later wrote. "I will say I had 63 years of thrills, sensations, depressions, panics, prosperity, grace, glory and gratitude."

Marvin Hunter's first experience as an editor came when he was twelve years old. He started his own little four-page, three-column newspaper which he called *The Mason Spy.* He soon became tired of the work, but kept a copy of his first newspaper all his life.

Hunter related that in the old days of country newspaper printing the "Long Primer" was standard type size. He soon learned to handset the long galleys of type. In 1891, he met Noah Rose, a photographer, who became his lifelong friend. Later in life, Rose supplied many photos for Hunter's books and articles.

In 1897, J. Marvin Hunter struck out on his own with an old George Washington hand press. He published *The Comfort-Times,* the first newspaper to be published in Comfort, Texas. He admitted the German settlers in Comfort treated him fine, but his inherited wanderlust soon took over. He decided to see the western part of Texas.

Hunter stopped in Sonora, Texas, and landed a printer's job on *The Devil's River News,* which was owned by two Irish brothers, Mike and Steve Murphy. The Murphys had come from Canada to Sonora to start a weekly newspaper. Hunter recorded, "The Murphys were bachelors and they gave me a room in their residence which Steve called 'The Boar's Nest.' This job was only temporary as I had only relieved the regular printer who had gone to visit kinfolks."

"Sonora," Hunter later recalled, "was then a pretty wild western town with several saloons and a gambling hall or two going full blast. It was located in the heart of the greatest sheep and cattle country in Texas. The town had a population of about 500, mostly ranchers. I set the news by hand and the printing was done on an old Washington hand press which had seen years of service. Then the regular printer returned to work and I once more found myself out of work.

"My next job offer came from a cousin of mine, Reed Calhoun, who wanted me to herd some sheep for

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Western Publications Archives

J. Marvin Hunter, from a photo taken by Noah Rose.

him. Since I had never herded sheep I didn't know what I was in for when I accepted his offer. It did not take me long to learn that an old scabby, snotty-nosed sheep is about the most senseless animal on earth." One sheep camp incident remained in Hunter's mind for the rest of his life. He later recorded the wonders of sleeping on the ground under the sparkling Texas stars. "One night," he wrote, "just after I had crawled into my snug bed, I felt something across the foot of it. It suddenly stopped and remained there, for I could feel its weight on my feet. Thinking it was one of those obnoxious little hydrophobia skunks that insist on getting into bed with a camper, I remained perfectly still for some time, thinking perhaps it would go away. But as he did not leave, I eased out of bed, threw some cedars on my dying camp fire and got ready to do battle with the intruder.

"That intruder turned out to be a large rattlesnake, about five feet long, and rather musically inclined, for as soon as he was disturbed by my sudden evacuation of the bed he began his whirring serenade. I dispatched him with a cedar limb, dragged him out of camp. But I could not sleep well after the battle, for every time I dozed off I began to dream that the rattlesnake had a mate somewhere in the vicinity, just waiting for a chance to bite me while I was asleep."

Hunter soon left the sheepherding business and took many other jobs besides being a printer and itinerant newspaper man. He hauled wood, did carpenter work, rode broncos, plowed, picked cotton, sold real estate, tried to sell life insurance, served as a postmaster and justice of the peace, and even worked as a traveling sewing machine man. All the while, the lure of printing never left him. By 1898, he was back in the printing business, working at *The San Angelo Press* in San Angelo, Texas.

Following that job, he was offered a job on *The Pecos Valley News* at Brownwood, Texas. He stayed there just long enough to get into a "fistic difficulty" with another printer before leaving for El Paso, Texas. There, he found a rip-roaring population of 16,000—saloons, gambling, and a red-light district where Tillie Howard's mansion of infamy flourished. He made note of the fact that in 1896 John Wesley Hardin was killed there by John Selman, who a few months later was killed by George Scarborough.

After some more shifting around, Hunter settled down to work on *The El Paso Evening News*. There, he met Ed Conley, who'd held a position on *The New York Sun*. Ed was a tubercular cripple who'd come to El Paso for his health. Ed soon left to go to Mexico City to become managing editor of *The Two Republics*, the oldest American newspaper in Mexico. After getting settled down he wrote back and offered Hunter the job as foreman of the mechanical department.

Accepting the position, Hunter found Mexico City to be a wonderful place. In 1899 there were 700,000 citizens and Porfirio Díaz was *El Presidente*. Somehow, *The Two Republics* ran afoul with government officials and all those connected with the paper were arrested and thrown in jail. Marvin escaped, barely making it out of Mexico alive. He hopped a freight train, leaving behind all his belongings, and with the aid of some American railroaders he finally ended up back in the states. As he put it, "I was dirty, unshaven, and lousy."

Safely back in Texas, Marvin Hunter quickly landed a job at Hull's Printing House in El Paso. It was about the time that George Scarborough was killed by outlaws in New Mexico. The Old West was dying out and a new century of great advancements was just over the horizon.

In 1900 Marvin accepted a job at Clifton, Arizona, and began work at *The Copper Era*, a weekly newspaper. After a few months there, the feet started itching again and he drifted to Deming, New Mexico, where he soon found work on *The Deming Headlight*.

While living in Deming, Hunter lived next door to a beautiful old lady who was an active church worker, a cultured and refined woman admired by all. He never suspected his neighbor "had trod the primrose path" or had operated a gambling house at Fort Griffin, Texas, during buffalo days. Later, he researched her life and chronicled it in his last book, *Lottie Deno, Her Life and Times*.

In 1901 Hunter bought a small newspaper in Bland, Arizona, a gold mining town in the Cochiti Mountains. His *Bland Herald* played

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out with the mines.

At this point in his life, Hunter decided to head back to Mason, Texas, where he had roots. There, he went to work with his father putting out *The Mason Herald.* It wasn't too long before he decided to be on the road again.

With his considerable talents Hunter never had any trouble finding work. He was soon busy getting out the news for *The Menard County Enterprise.*

On December 23, 1903, Marvin Hunter married Susie Rogers, a childhood friend, at Mason, Texas. By then, Hunter was twenty-four and his wife was twenty. Hunter had always wanted a newspaper of his own, so he purchased a small news plant at London, Texas, in Kimble County. He called his newspaper *The Kimble County Crony,* and started his business with a cheap Army press, no slugs or lead, no job type, and barely enough type to set two pages of news.

Marvin later admitted he hustled early and late for subscribers, often trading butter, eggs, chickens, and vegetables in exchange for his newspapers. He now had a family to support; a son, John Warren, was born in 1904, and a daughter, Myra Jennette, was born in 1906. Despite his responsibilities as a family man, Hunter soon felt like a frog in a well, hopping around and around, getting nowhere. He felt his newspaper had peaked out. Once again he grew restless.

Westward, the new town of Garden City, Texas, offered him an assurance of $500 a year if he would start a newspaper. He sold out and moved once more, his wife and babies snug beside him in their narrow-tread, one-horse buggy. They camped along the way to Garden City, sleeping on the ground with the babies between them, a shotgun close at hand.

One time, just as day was breaking, Hunter spied a small object coming toward his family. He calculated it was one of those pesky hydrophobia skunks wanting to join them.

Hunter blasted away, only to realize he'd killed a poor, starved kitten someone had dumped out on the road. His wife, he said, never let him forget the deed.

Garden City soon lost its lure and the Hunters bought a section of land on Copperas Creek in Kimble County. Marvin was ready to stock the land with sheep, goats, and cattle and "Let wealth come to me in great gobs." In a short while even the ranching business became tiresome so he traded his ranch for a variety store in San Angelo, Texas. In no time he decided he wasn't cut out to be a merchant and he soon started a newspaper at Hughes, Texas. "Got back into the harness that fit me," he wrote.

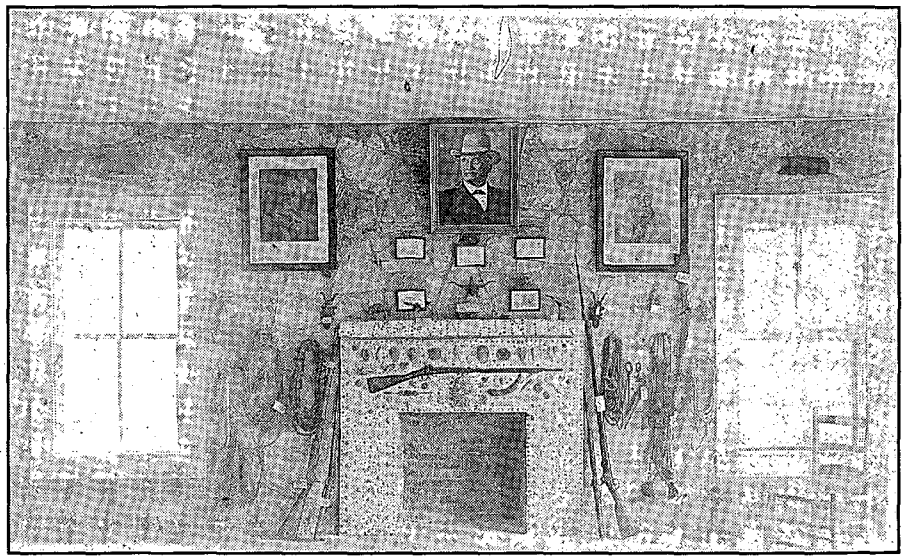
In the old harness Hunter printed *The Hughes Headlight* in a new town where there were only six residences and no post office. Hunter suggested Hughes should be changed to Carlsbad because the mineral waters that had been discovered there which were similar to those in Carlsbad, Austria. So, his newspaper was changed to *The Carlsbad Headlight,* and Hunter was appointed the town's first postmaster.

There, his third child was born, a son named Marvin, Jr. In 1910 their last child was born in Carlsbad and named Rachel. Life was rosy. Marvin Hunter was postmaster, editor, president of the Business League, and superintendent of the Sunday School. The town had grown to 400 souls. Loads of homeseekers from the north were coming in twice monthly to buy land, to put in crops, and build new homes. Rainfall was plentiful, and crops grew in abundance.

Then, typical of Texas weather, the good rains stopped falling and the land around Carlsbad dried up. Northern farmers, accustomed to plenty of rainfall, made a sweeping exodus from the Lone Star State. "My newspaper failed dismally but I determined to hang on," Hunter recorded. "I launched a new publication I'd been dreaming about for years. I called it *Hunter's Magazine* and devoted it to frontier history, border tragedy, and pioneer achievement. I printed the little magazine in my Carlsbad office but the horrible drought forced me to move my press to Ozona, Texas, where I started another newspaper, *The Ozona Optimist.* My little dream magazine folded up."

Following a series of failures in Texas and New Mexico, Hunter found himself "dead broke" and his family sick from the influenza epidemic sweeping across Texas. He landed in San Antonio, Texas, securing a job as a journeyman printer, "hanging up his slug" in the company room of *The San Antonio Light.*

While living and working in San Antonio, Hunter, who was always



Western Publications Archives

The interior of the Frontier Times Museum.

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interested in history, attended a meeting of the Old Time Trail Drivers Association. In 1920, George Saunders, president of the group, gave Marvin Hunter the awesome task of compiling a 500-page book containing the various stories of the men who had gone up the trails with great herds of cattle.

The job was a fantastic opportunity for Hunter, but there was a catch: the book had to be ready by August, in ninety days! Saunders handed over some sketches already turned in, and said if they didn't get enough stories to fill 500 pages, "then Hunter could fill in with some Indian stories and other frontier material he hand on hand."

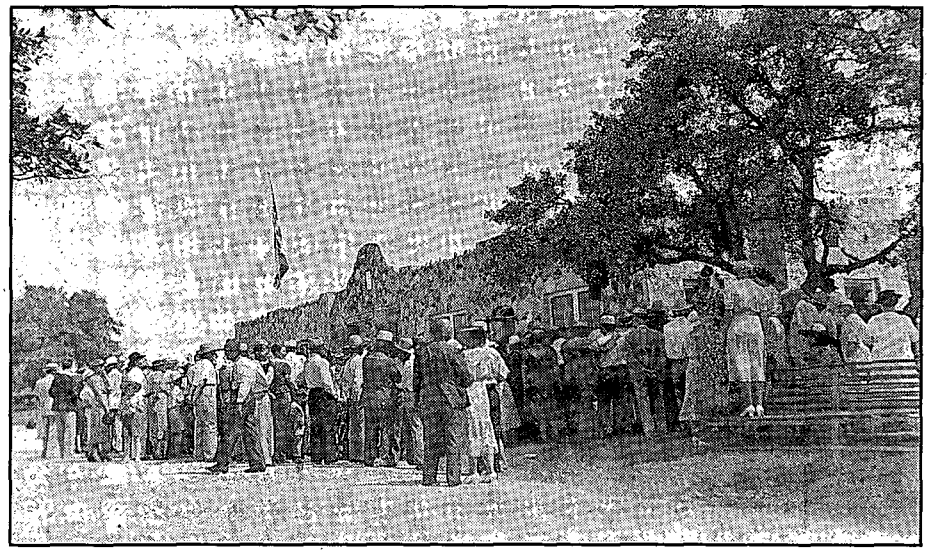
"But Mr. Saunders..."

"No buts about it, Hunter. Do it!"

Hunter later wrote: "I backed my ears and tackled the assignment." Continuing to work full time at *The Light*, Hunter went to work on the compiling job, managing to get only two or three hours of sleep each night. The task at hand was eating him alive but he stayed with it.

Hunter finished the job on time. No mention of payment had ever been made. It was just a handshake deal that Hunter would make the deadline and that Saunders would do right by him. When Hunter presented his work, Saunders asked, "Will $500 cover your trouble?" Marvin Hunter accepted the fee, remarking the sum "lifted the mortgage off our little home in San Antone."

Compiling *The Trail Drivers of Texas* not only lifted the mortgage, it established Marvin Hunter as a major historian of statue. It also elevated George Saunders in the eyes of the old trail drivers. After Saunders' death, J. Frank Dobie wrote a tribute to him, saying, "How George Saunders enjoyed those meetings of the old Texas Trail Drivers. He enjoyed running them; he enjoyed the pleasure so manifest of the other old timers. When I first knew him he had just about quit dancing, but the singing of the Bandera boys he and Marvin Hunter arranged to have at the meetings and the old time fiddle music and the square dances were as much a part of the herd boss's pleasure as if he were singing and dancing himself.



Western Publications Archives

The May 20, 1933, dedication and opening of The Frontier Times Museum, Bandera, Texas.

"George Saunders taught me a great deal. He enriched my life. In all humility I say it, but I am a better man for having known him."

Now Hunter's future, the direction of his talents, seemed clear at last. His destiny was cast. The old stories, lived by the men and women of the frontiers, needed to be written down before they were lost by the passage of time. Somebody needed to do it, and J. Marvin Hunter accepted the responsibility.

Thinking about this new direction of his life, Hunter read a small advertisement in the *San Antonio Express* classifieds in 1921: "For sale— weekly newspaper, county seat town, 50 miles from San Antonio. Only paper in Bandera County." Hunter immediately followed up, feeling the urge to once again own a newspaper and to find time to write down all those old stories.

Bandera appeared to be just the right place and on March 1, 1921, Hunter bought *The Bandera New Era*, which consisted of a small newspaper press, job press, and good type. His family stayed in San Antonio until school was out, then joined him in Bandera, an old town established in 1853 but which still had only 400 citizens.

Marvin Hunter described the town as a ratty looking place with rundown homes, streets rough and cluttered, and not many thriving businesses. But the saving grace was how the town lay nestled in a great horseshoe bend of the clear Medina River, a backdrop of blue hills circling the community. The natural beauty of the area was spectacular. Marvin Hunter envisioned great possibilities and growth. All the place needed was a clean-up and some good publicity. Tourists would flock there. Hunter set about to advertise Bandera County as "The Playground of Texas."

At last, J. Marvin Hunter, the rolling stone, became lodged, to roll no more. As a quickly rising community leader, he became a catalyst. He clamored for better roads, schools, better everything. Some Bandera County citizens called him a real windjammer, while others proclaimed him an outright visionary. Regardless of varied opinions, they liked and bought his newspaper. He soon put out a twenty-page, illustrated edition with photos of beautiful scenes and proud native sons. The publication sold out.

Encouraged with his success, he

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Help Us to Build This Museum

A few years ago I began to collect relics of the early days. At the time I did not intend to start a museum, but my collection has grown into a sure enough museum, and I find that I need a building to house this collection. I am not financially able to put up the kind of a building I need, but I have worked out a plan whereby everyone interested in preserving such relics may help to provide the necessary building. Let it be understood at the outset that I am not asking for assistance without giving something in return, for value received in fact. Further on I will explain my plan fully, and those who are disposed to help in the undertaking are invited to do so.

In my collection of relics and curios will be found ox-yokes, spinning wheel, side-saddles, powder horns, hunting horns, spurs, bridle bits, stirrups, padlocks, old time guns, pistols, bullet moulds, candle moulds, churns, farm tools, meat grinders, sausage stuffers, cooking utensils, pot hooks, old dishes, rawhide bottom chairs, mounted eagles, deer heads; old time photographs of outlaws, desperadoes, peace officers, Texas Rangers, frontier cabins and frontier scenes; branding irons, quirts, lariats, freak growths of timber, petrified wood, flint arrowheads, grinding stones, tomahawks, etc., and many other relics and curios too numerous to mention.

I own a splendid lot in Bandera on which I intend to erect a stone building, 20x40 feet in size, and I want to start the construction work just as soon as possible. I am calling upon the readers of my monthly magazine, Frontier Times, all over the United States to assist me in this undertaking by sending in their subscription for one or two years, and many have already responded.

To Aid Me in Raising the Necessary Funds to Erect This Building I Have Reprinted the Book,

Authentic History of

SAM BASS

And His Gang

I have reprinted the book, "The Authentic History of Sam Bass and His Gang," first published in 1878, and the entire proceeds from the sale of this book will be used in erecting this museum building. The book is now ready for distribution at One Dollar per copy.

NOW HERE IS MY PLAN:

To every person who sends me one dollar I will send a copy of the Sam Bass book.

To every person who sends me three dollars I will send Frontier Times for one year and a copy of the Sam Bass book.

To every person who sends me five dollars, I will send them Frontier Times for two years, and a copy of the Sam Bass book.

And that is not all. A tablet will be placed on the front of this museum building and the name of every person who assists in the erection of the building in the manner above mentioned will appear on this tablet.

For this money you will get one or two years subscription to the Frontier Times and a copy of "The Authentic History of Sam Bass and His Gang," so you are not merely making a free will contribution, but will get value received. And you can have the satisfaction of lending your aid to a most worthy cause. If you will do this, send in your subscription today, and assist in the preservation of the relics of those days when Texas was young and was making real history. Sincerely yours,

J. Marvin Hunter

Last Call For Museum Funds

We have a few copies of "The Authentic History of Sam Bass and His Gang," left on hand to sell at $1.00 per copy and we would urge all who wish to assist in the erection of Frontier Times Museum building to order a copy of this book at once. The name of each purchaser of a copy of the Sam Bass book is to be placed on a tablet in the museum building, if the order is received before April 1st. After that date no names can be placed on the tablet, as it will be framed and placed in position.

Frontier Times Museum building is almost completed. It has been built by the generosity of the friends of this little magazine, who sent in orders for the book and for subscriptions. We will still accept these orders on the basis of $5.00 for two years' subscription to Frontier Times and a copy of the Sam Bass book; $3.00 for a year's subscription to Frontier Times and a copy of the Sam Bass book, or $1.00 for a copy of the Sam Bass book. Every dollar we have received in this way since we announced our plan for erecting the museum building has been used for that purpose and nothing else. As soon as the building is completed we will publish a full list of all contributors, with pictures of the new building.

Please order your copy of "The Authentic History of Sam Bass and His Gang" today. We want your name on that tablet.

J. Marvin Hunter

"hopped up" *A Pioneer History of Bandera County*, doing all the writing, printing, and binding himself. He sold the book for $1.50 a copy and that too, soon sold out. Next, came the purchase of a new linotype machine, a new building, a larger and faster press, equipment needed to print all the historical material he'd been collecting from a lifetime of travel.

He still dreamed of printing that little magazine dedicated to frontier days, so in October 1923 he produced his first issue of *Frontier Times*. He worked early and late. People bought his new magazine, which featured many of their old friends and kinfolks. The appreciative public also began to bring to Hunter many of their precious relics of the past. Hundreds of items became entrusted to the one man they knew would appreciate and display their heirlooms. It was not long until the little room in his printing shop was too small to hold everything. Marvin Hunter began to dream of building a nice museum to house all the relics and his growing collection of historical books.

It was not a good time to have dreams as the Depression was in full force. Goats were down to a quarter per animal, and mohair was bringing only eight cents a pound; financial conditions in the ranching communities were terrible. To make bad matters worse, a fierce drought hit the area. A museum seemed an impossible dream.

Marvin Hunter lay awake nights thinking of how he could raise enough money to build a stone museum that would protect his library and relics from the dangers of fire. Then, one night he came up with a plan: "To every person who sends me $1: I will send a copy of my *Sam Bass And His Gang* book; to every person who sends me $3 I will send my *Frontier Times* for one year and a copy of the book; To every person who sends me $5, I will send them *Frontier Times* for two years and a copy of the book."

"And that's not all, folks! Everyone who assists in the building of this museum by contributing $5.00 or more will have their names inscribed on granite columns to be placed on the entrance of the building. If you do this, send in your subscription today, you will assist in the preservation of the relics of those days when Texas was young and was making real history."

Marvin Hunter later admitted that he put "a mortgage on his talents" because most of the material he promised was still in his head and not on paper. But Hunter was a man of his word, and when subscriptions began coming in, he went to work with a fervent dedication. His museum was about to become a reality. He knew what he wanted his museum to look like and he soon discovered a young builder who lived in the town of Medina, thirteen miles up the road. His name was Hough LeStourgeon, and he could lay native fieldstone "like nobody's business."

LeStourgeon, now in his eighties, clearly remembers discussing the museum plans with the famous newspaperman. "I was just a young man getting started in the construction business when Mr. Hunter approached me about building his little museum in Bandera. I agreed

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on $3 a day wages and we broke ground Monday, the second day of January, 1933.

"Mr. Hunter collected the fieldstone for me so I don't know exactly where all the rocks came from—some say from an old 1878 fence. Melesse Rugh of Bandera says her husband, Ashley Rugh, owned a truckline at that time and he hauled the stones from Mason, Hunter's old hometown. Margaret Short Evans of Bandera knows some of the stones came from the Short Ranch. Since there were several additions to the original building, probably those stones did come from many different locations.

"I did all the stone work on the original 20x40 foot building. Tom Anderwald of Bandera did the carpentry work. Every day Mr. Hunter would be on hand to advise us and check on the progress. People would drop by with some unusual rocks and I would place them in the wall when Mr. Hunter liked them. In the northeast wall he asked me to place a four foot circular stone once used by a pioneer as a well top. In the 22-inch hole in the center we placed a glass on which Mr. Hunter's son, Warren, painted a picture of Geronimo, the Indian chief. The boss wanted some pointed rocks along the roof line for a decorative touch.

"As I recall, it wasn't long until that first little building was full of relics and more space was needed. By that time my career had been so well launched by Mr. Hunter's praise that I had too many jobs to work on his expansion projects. Sometime later, Mr. Hunter talked me and my brother Wallace into traveling to Harper, Texas, to build his son Warren a printing shop. During the month or so of construction we stayed in Warren's home and his wife cooked for us. Best folks in the world.

"Mr. [J. Marvin] Hunter was the finest gentleman I ever met. He had good ideas and he would advise me in a nice, soft way to save my money and invest in riverfront property and ranchland. Mr. Hunter's handshake was all you needed to seal a deal, and his word was his bond. He was a good solid man who raised a good solid family."

On May 20, 1933, Marvin Hunter proudly held the formal opening of his Frontier Times Museum. "More than 1,000 people were in attendance, many of them being readers of my *Frontier Times* from various parts of the state," Marvin Hunter wrote of the celebration." It was a most auspicious event, and an encouragement to me."

Such success prompted J. Marvin to sell his *Bandera New Era* newspaper so he could devote more time and energy to his historical writing and the promotion of his museum. In 1934, when times were getting a little better, he raised enough money to build a twenty-four- by forty-foot addition. Later, he built another room to print *Frontier Times*, financing the project with the publication of *The Life and Times of Bigfoot Wallace* and other books. (Now out of print, Hunter's originals are valued collector's items.) He was so busy his entire family pitched in and helped.

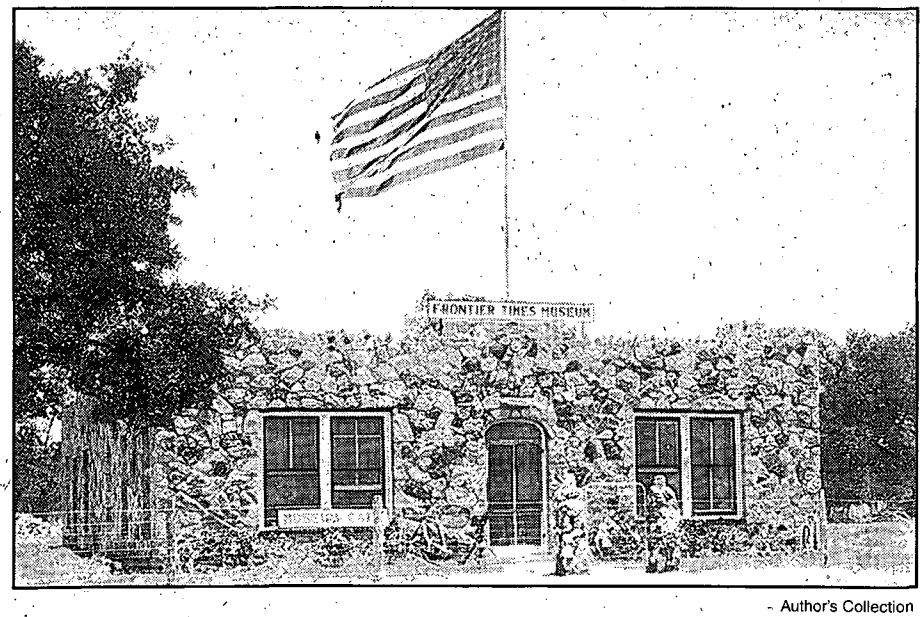
Hunter's daughter, Jennette, helped by cooking lunch each day for the family crew, and soon others were dropping by to eat and have some free stimulating conversation with the talkative Mr. Hunter. The Museum Cafe, as it was soon known, became a profitable success, and continued operation for some time. In a recent interview, his daughter, fondly known around Bandera as "Miss Nettie," was asked what type of food she cooked.

"Just good old country food," she replied. "You know—steak, potatoes, biscuits, gravy, stuff like that."

Meanwhile, more collections for the museum were being given into Hunter's care. One outstanding legacy came from an English woman, Louisa Gordon, who willed a beautiful collection of 400 bells and other objects gathered from around the world. Local displays of saddles, guns, arrowheads, quilts, and spurs were placed on display among rich Oriental and European objects.

J. Marvin rated his most interesting relic in the museum to be the shrunken head of a Jivaro Indian girl. Charles Fagan of Rahway, New Jersey, donated the item and Mr. Hunter got a kick out of standing beside the shrunken head and asking her, "What did your tribe kill you for?" And she would say, "nothing."

Once, a listener to the story got pretty nervous. His eyes got big and he began to stutter and stammer, and finally asked, "Does she say



- Author's Collection

J. Marvin Hunter's Frontier Times Museum, Bandera, Texas. Circa 1935.

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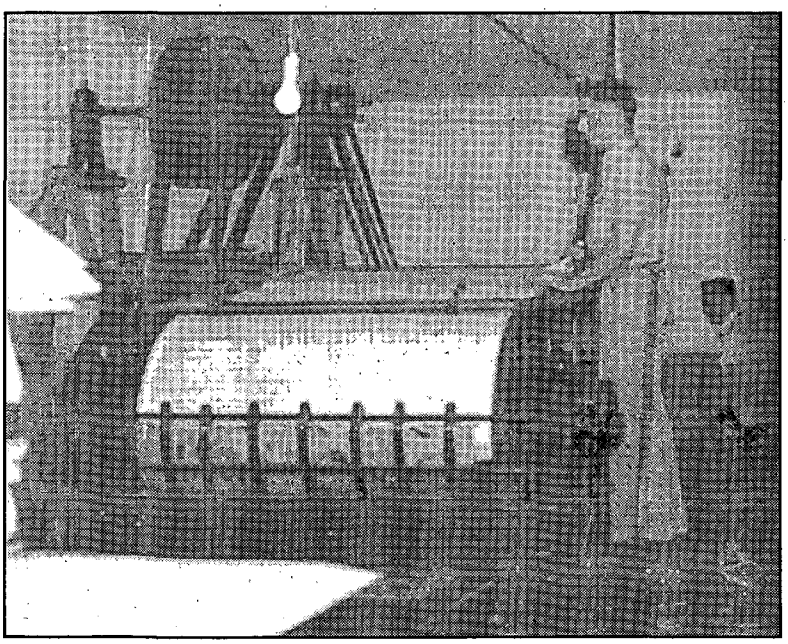
'nothing' in English?"

The museum was a huge success as were the magazines, booklets, and books Hunter continued publishing. His reputation grew and soon his publications were attracting the attention of famous writers who recognized the contribution Hunter was making to the preservation of frontier history. Among the writers he soon called friends were Zane Grey, J. Frank Dobie, Walter Prescott Webb, Eugene Barker and others. Various governors, senators, state officials, university professors, and the famed Texas Rangers also became his readers and supporters.

During this busy period of his life, Marvin Hunter also organized Old Settlers Reunions, fiddle contests, and other events to promote local history. He sponsored talented citizens to perform on KTSA radio in San Antonio. He once considered buying the station so he could produce programs dedicated to frontier days and history. Probably because there weren't enough hours in the day to add another project to his busy schedule, he did not buy the radio station. Somehow he did find time to offer a Chevrolet car to the person selling the most subscriptions to his publications. A Miss Pauline Pue of Medina won the car and drove it for many years.

When J. Marvin Hunter realized he was becoming a celebrity, he began to wonder if a man with no high school diploma or college degrees was qualified to carry on the historical work that consumed him. He confided his feelings to a well-educated professor friend of his. The professor replied, "If you had university degrees, Hunter, you would probably be teaching Texas History somewhere. You are doing more good where you are."

So Hunter continued doing more good where he was, right in old Bandera. He compiled volume two of *The Trail Drivers of Texas*, which was later added to the first volume to form a book of over 1,000 pages. This book is still being printed, with new generations of appreciative readers adding it to their libraries.



Courtesy Ray Marvin and Ruth Hay

Ray Marvin Hay, grandson of J. Marvin Hunter, feeding the newspaper press for the *Alpine* (Texas) *Avalanche*, 1948.

J. Marvin Hunter never stopped writing. He produced *An Album of Gunfighters*, using the photographs of his old friend, Noah Rose, and the artwork of his talented son, Warren. Another out of print, sold out title was added to the list.

In June 1953, Bandera held a big centennial celebration, prompting Marvin Hunter to compile and publish *A Century of Intrepid History*. Several thousand copies were printed. It contained more than 100 pages of Bandera County history and hundreds of old-time photographs of early-day citizens, frontier scenes, and old buildings. Still in demand, this volume is currently being reprinted by Hunter's descendants.

His four children followed in their famous father's footsteps. Warren became a newspaper man and well known artist. Marvin, Jr., became a printer and newsman with his father's flair for words. Daughter Jennette Hunter Saul developed into a fine reporter and business manager in their publishing business. Another daughter, Rachel Hunter Short, operated the linotype in the family business and her father depended on her expertise to produce good copy.

Printing was in the bloodstream of the Hunter family. In 1945 Hunter's daughter Jennette got him back into the newspaper business. They published *The Bandera Bulletin*, a weekly that was popular from the first day of publication. Joining them, and carrying on an old family tradition, a grandson, Ray Marvin Hay, learned the trade from his famous grandfather. *The Bandera Bulletin* turned out to be Hunter's last newspaper, the final chapter in the journey of a pioneer printer who herded millions of words down the trail.

J. Marvin Hunter, the great historian, died June 29, 1957, and was laid to rest in the Bandera Cemetery.

Though he no longer greets the thousands of visitors to his Frontier Times Museum, his dramatic personality is imprinted like a hot Texas branding iron on every object in view. Though he no longer writes new stories or books, the old ones are as rewarding as pulling on a comfortable pair of cowboy boots. And, though he was born with one foot in the frontier, and one in the modern, he managed to bring both feet together in a most remarkable way. What he stood for, and lived for, lives on after him.

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Gray Tales

When All Roads Led to Tombstone. By John Plesent Gray. Edited and annotated by W. Lane Rogers. (Tamarack Books, Inc., PO Box 190313, Boise, Idaho 83719. Photographs, maps, bibliography, index. 211 pages. $19.95 Paper.)

John Plesent Gray (1860-1943) was the son of Mike Gray who was involved in the townsite controversies in early Tombstone. In August 1881, J.P. Gray's brother, Dixie Lee Gray, was ambushed and killed along with "Old Man" Clanton, fugitive Jim Crane, and two others in Guadalupe Canyon. While the Grays ran with some rough customers, J.P. was an educated man, having graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1880. Gray penned his memoirs in old age and deposited them at the Arizona Historical Society in 1940.

While this is the first publication of Gray's manuscript in full, these memoirs have long been known to researchers. Odie B. Faulk (*Tombstone—Myth and Reality*, 1972) and Paula Mitchell Marks (*And Die in the West*, 1989) both referred to the Gray material. The claim made in this edition's foreword that the discovery of this manuscript is equivalent to the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls is hyperbolic nonsense.

Memoirs, written in old age, pose vexing problems. Memories change over the years, often being influenced by personal bias, the written record, and the mistaken memories of other "old timers." While classified as "primary sources," memoirs are an especially vulnerable form of data. The accuracy of even the most earnest recall can be seriously corrupted by the passing of the years. It is in failing to appreciate the problems with J.P. Gray's version of events that W. Lane Rogers is most open to criticism. Rogers strenuously avoids pointing out crucial difficulties with many of Gray's claims.

A prime example of Rogers' reverential reserve as a commentator is in the coverage of the O.K. Corral gunfight. While the foreword to this book makes much ado over Gray's alleged "eyewitness account," its credibility completely crumbles when viewed critically.

Gray writes, "Our home was on Fremont at Sixth and the battle—or rather murder—took place on Fremont Street between Fourth and Fifth." The fight, however, was not between "Fourth and Fifth." It was between Third and Fourth and closer, at that, to Third Street. How could anyone at Sixth and Fremont clearly see an occurrence nearly three blocks away? It simply can't be done, yet Rogers never poses the question nor points out Gray's mislocation of the event.

Beyond the implausibility of Gray's having seen what he claims, given his stated position, all three specific statements he makes about the affray are soundly contradicted by verifiable eyewitnesses.

Gray writes, "the three Earps—Wyatt, Virgil, and Morgan—and Doc Holliday had stepped suddenly out on to Fremont Street from the rear entrance of the O.K. Stable lot and immediately commenced firing on the three cowboys, who were preparing to leave town. In fact Frank McLaury was sitting on his horse and at first fire fell mortally wounded, but game to the last he returned the fire, wounding Virgil in the arm, leaving that member useless for any further gunplay in the life of Virgil Earp."

The problems here are: No other witness claims the Earps sprang from the rear of the O.K. Corral and "commenced firing." It is incontestable that the Earps approached the cowboys by marching north up Fourth Street, then turning west down Fremont. Frank McLaury was not astride his horse when the shooting erupted. No eyewitness testifying before Wells Spicer claimed this. Ike Clanton, Johnny Behan, Wyatt Earp, and *all* other sworn witnesses who testified on this had Frank standing in the lot. Virgil Earp was not shot in the arm as Gray contends but, rather he was shot through the right calf. Rogers does dutifully point this out but the other problems are all ignored. As an account of the street-fight, J.P. Gray's version is wholly without merit.

Despite the abundant problems with Gray's memoir and the oddly uncritical approach of W. Lane Rogers, it is good to finally have this manuscript in print. In the near future, Neil Carmony will publish his own annotated version of the Tombstone section of John Plesent Gray's recollections. Hopefully, all who purchase Rogers' edition will supplement it with the more critically astute Carmony commentary.—*Jeff Morey, Long Beach, California.*

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Gold Rush

Two Years in the Klondike and Alaskan Gold-Fields, 1896-1898. By William B. Haskell. (University of Alaska Press, Box 756240, Fairbanks, Alaska 99975-6240. 578 pages, illustrations. $34.95 Cloth; $18.98 Paper.)

Terence Cole considers this book to be "a literary and historical gem," with the author's prose being practically poetry and his humor right up there with Mark Twain's. In fact, he thinks that the book is worthy of comparison with *Two Years Before the Mast.*

Well, we can forgive Cole his excess of enthusiasm. After all, he wrote the preface and he is a history prof at the University of Alaska. But the book is not really up to Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years,* a genuine classic of Western Americana. Still, it is quite a good book.

This volume by Haskell is a first-rate memoir with much guidebook and how-to information skillfully inserted into the narrative—how to mine, to build a boat, to put up a winter-proof log cabin. Mainly, it is an interesting account of the fatiguing and sometimes dangerous journey of Haskell to (and in) the Alaskan/Canadian goldfields. He was on the scene in Circle City in 1896, long before the big rush to Dawson, upriver, in 1898-99. Haskell was an excellent reporter on the landscape and the men and women who flocked to the last real El Dorado. Although he was a bigot when it came to Indians and Inuits (Eskimos), unfairly representing them all as dirty and lazy, he was ahead of his time in regard to women. Unlike many other macho miners, he did not automatically "put down" the rather surprising number of female Argonauts in the Northwest.

Haskell's book first appeared exactly 100 years ago and is now republished for the first time. This is a facsimile reprint, but the illustrations are surprisingly good and the type is large enough for us old duffers with specs.

If the text is not quite that of the caliber of Dana's account of the cowhide trade in old Mexican California, the book does deserve to be shelved alongside Pierre Berton's *Klondike Fever.* And, take it from an honest book reviewer, that is high praise, indeed.—*Richard H. Dillon, Mill Valley, California.*

Colorado Graves

From the Grave, a Roadside Guide to Colorado's Pioneer Cemeteries. By Linda Wommack. (Caxton Press, 312 Main Street, Caldwell, Idaho 83605. 477 pages, photos, maps. $24.95 Paper.)

Cemeteries have been called "cities of the dead," yet author, Linda Wommack breathes life into the subject and introduces readers to more than 1,000 pioneers whose life stories played out in the cities, towns, and gold camps of Colorado.

Not only is *From the Grave* a welcome tool for genealogists, but also a handy guide for travelers with an interest in history. Where can you find more history than a cemetery?

If I had had a copy of Linda's book last summer when vacationing in Colorado, I know I would have found Georgetown's Alvarado Cemetery, using her careful directions, and returned home with my own photograph of Louis Dupuy's interesting monument. With a reputation for misogyny, he shares his final resting place with Sophie Galley. She wasn't just any lady, but you can read more about their relationship in Linda's book. Or you might enjoy reading about Horace Tabor, silver king of Leadville, and his two wives, Augusta and "Baby Doe." The stories of these folks are so supercharged, they simply beg to be told and retold.

This book takes the reader through many of the best known and more obscure cemeteries in Colorado. A handy index and an impressive bibliography round out this comprehensive research tool. Linda Wommack has given serious history buffs a nice book for our research libraries, and for those who only dabble, there are still enough real people profiles to make *From the Grave* a good investment.—*Jan Holden, Vancouver, Washington.*

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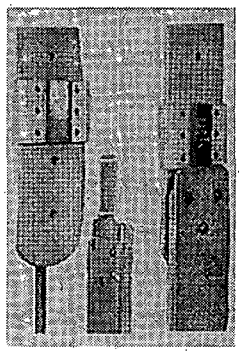

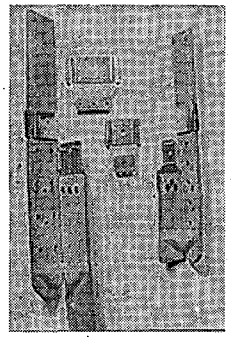

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WYATT AT THE WHEEL AGAIN!

Back in the October issue I included a question as to whether Wyatt Earp did or did not have a driver's license. I referred to the familiar photograph of Wyatt standing next to what I then called a Model T. With that photo as evidence, I suggested that Wyatt certainly could drive but may have overlooked the necessity of actually getting a license to drive. As yet there is no solid answer on the license question, but I have turned up some interesting material regarding Earp and autos.

First, in California, where Wyatt spent his last years, it was not required to obtain a driver's license until 1913. And thanks to antique car buff James Petersen, Jr., of Gardena, California, we now know that what was a Model T to my eyes was indeed a Packard! The photo is shown here and is believed to have been made in 1928 or 1929, the year of Wyatt's death.

Furthermore, we know that Earp and movie star William S. Hart were good friends, and Hart was also an avid automobile collector. This Packard is possibly Hart's, rather than Wyatt's. Special thanks to Lee Silva for the use of the photograph, the original of which is now in the Lincoln Ellsworth Collection in the Arizona Historical Society.

The Youngers in Owatonna?

A special question recently came via e-mail. Gilberto O. Ries of Brazil, who describes himself as "an aficionado of the West" wrote, telling me of his experience as a foreign exchange student in 1973-74. He lived with a family in Owatonna, Minnesota, about a good hour's drive south of St. Paul. "My [host] family took me to Northfield to see the reenactment of the bank robbery attempted by the James Gang. In Owatonna there is a very nice park named Mineral Springs and with my friends we used to go there quite often. My friends told me that Jesse and Frank James had stopped in that park on their escape from Northfield. Did they pass through Owatonna on their way back to Missouri?"

Almost positively no, reason being that the best available information indicates the James brothers and the rest of the gang—the Youngers and Charlie Pitts—split up near Mankato. The James boys continued in a westerly direction, while

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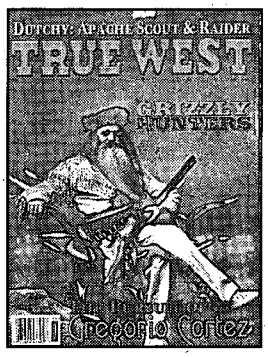

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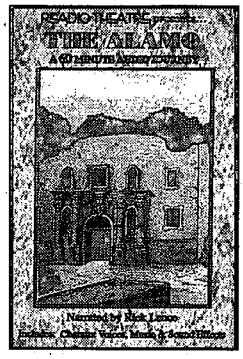

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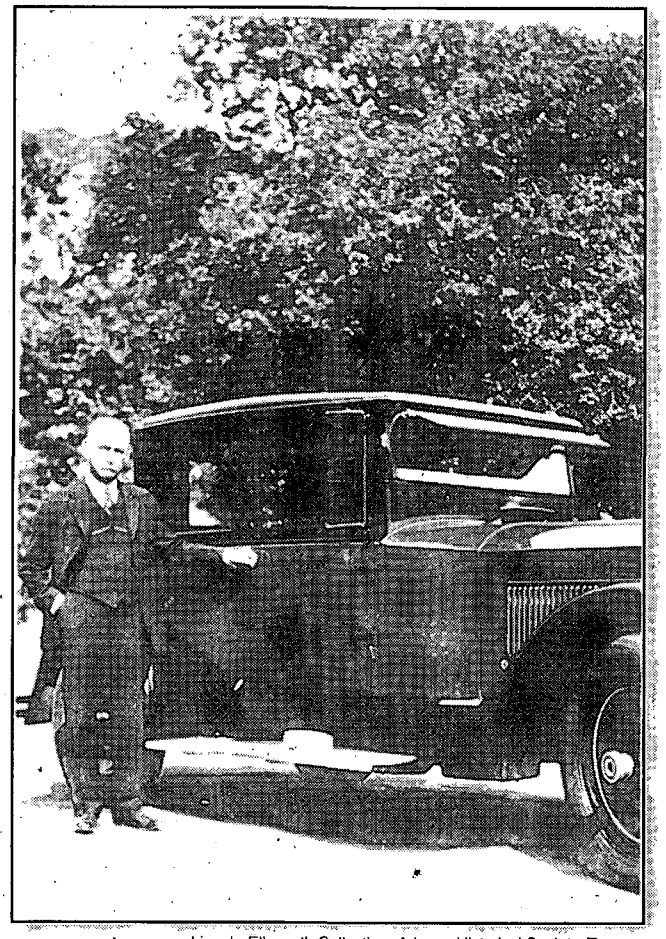

Lincoln Ellsworth Collection, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson

Wyatt Earp and Packard, circa 1928-1929.

the Youngers and Pitts headed towards Madelia to the south, where they were eventually captured, with Pitts being killed. The James boys, by heading west, did not get close to Owatonna.

The Youngers certainly spent a little time there, although as prisoners. After they were placed in the Madelia jail, Rice County Sheriff Ara Barton took charge of them to deliver them to Faribault for their trial. On September 22, according to the *Winona Daily Republican*, Barton "conveyed them to the jail at Faribault, taking them by the short route over the Winona and St. Peter road via Owatonna." So, the Youngers were definitely in Owatonna, albeit in chains, but the James brothers—no!

Cards and Whiskey Don't Mix

Old West lady gamblers were few and they left dim paper trails indeed. Sybil F. Crawford, Dallas, Texas, has been researching one of these rarities, Lurline Monte Verde, born in Missouri as Belle Siddons. Sybil is hoping to locate additional information about her life.

Belle Siddons was the niece of C.F. Jackson, the last elected governor of Missouri prior to the Civil War. She graduated from the Missouri Female Seminary at Lexington. If it had not been for the war she would have no doubt enjoyed a fulfilling social life, but Belle Siddons became a spy for the Confederacy. She wasn't too successful; she was arrested in December 1862. After several months of incarceration she was released on her word that she would leave the state, at least until the war's end.

Belle Siddons then went to Texas and after Lee's surrender returned to Missouri. In 1868 she married a Dr. Newton Hallett, an army surgeon. The couple went to Fort Brown, Texas, where Belle learned the basics of surgery, dissection, and gambling. Dr. Hallett was fond of

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When Dr. Hallett died from yellow fever in 1869, his widow chose not surgery, but gambling, to earn her livelihood. She relocated in Kansas, where she no doubt perfected her trade, gambling against Texas cowboys. She also had a new name, now Madame Vestal. She was in Kansas for a few years and then followed the circuit to Denver.

When gold was discovered in the Black Hills, there was a rush to South Dakota and Madame Vestal followed it, although she spent some time in Cheyenne, Wyoming, prior to arriving in Deadwood. A correspondent of the *New York Tribune* gave her a laudatory write-up in the issue of January 3, 1878. She was known now by a new name, Lurline Monte Verde, and described by one writer as "flawlessly groomed, artfully jeweled and gowned."

Instead of concentrating on cards the lady gambler fell in love with a no-good highwayman named Archie McLaughlin. After a bungled stagecoach robbery, McLaughlin and two companions were taken by masked vigilantes and lynched.

Madame Vestal, a.k.a. Lurline Monte Verde, was greatly affected by the loss of her lover, and reportedly it was at this point that she went "down hill." She roamed the circuit, gambling in Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and finally, San Francisco.

In October 1881 police in San Francisco picked up Belle Siddons, near death. She was taken to a hospital where she gained some strength, but she eventually died in the hospital from the effects of severe alcoholism. She was forty at the time of her death.

If you have a question, send it to Chuck Parsons, Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076. Please keep questions brief. Sign your full name and address, including zip code. Names will be published if question is used. Space limitations may not permit us to use all questions. Due to the volume of mail, we cannot forward correspondence to people whose questions appear in "Answer Man."

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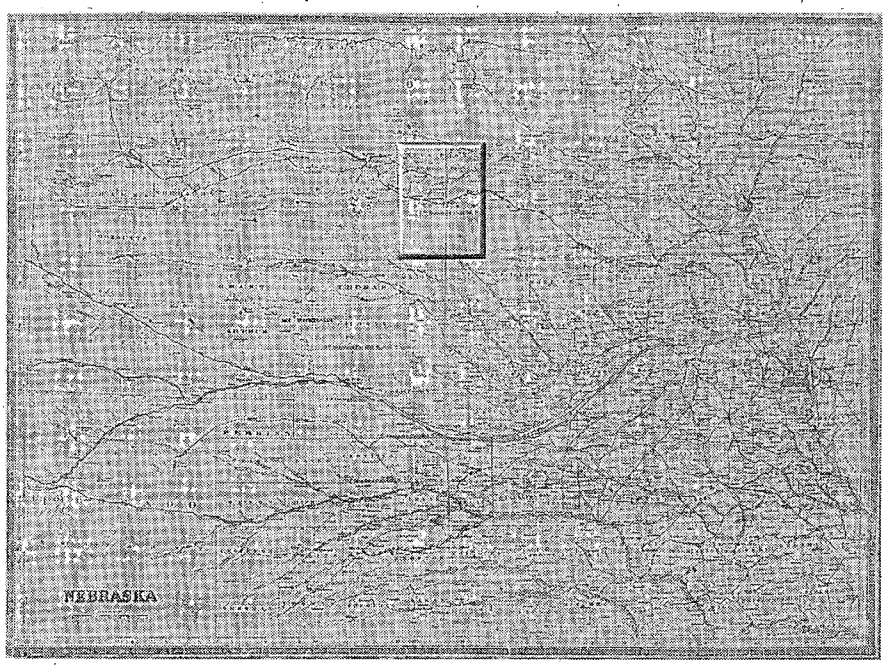
A Lynching in Nebraska

By Chris Roberts



Author's Collection
The 1895 murder of Caroline Holton rocked Nebraska and effectively ended, the vigilantes role in Keya Paha County (outlined).

The year was 1895 and a wave of violence fell upon the Niabrara valley in Nebraska. Vigilantes rode the night in a campaign of extermination against suspected rustlers. Frontier justice was swift and found at the end of a rope. The rustlers engaged in retaliatory strikes in an effort to silence those who would give evidence against them. Adding to the disturbed conditions of the valley, the vigilantes themselves were suspected of rustling. Ranchers in the area lived in constant fear of both parties. In this atmosphere of chaos a murder was committed that shocked the entire populace of the state. The slaying of Mrs. Caroline Holton in Keya Paha County marked a turning point in the establishment of law and order on the Nebraska frontier.

The night of March 13, 1895, would prove to be the last for Caroline Holton. In her remote cabin, located two miles northeast of Brocksburgh, Holton made preparations to retire for the evening. At this point, an assailant or assailants entered the cabin, a fierce struggle ensued, and Caroline was restrained. With businesslike precision a noose was placed around her neck, dragging her from her bed. The other end of the rope was tied to a ridge pole in the cabin and Caroline Holton was hanged. After she expired, the body was cut down with a hatchet, which was thrown down next to the corpse. The cabin was thoroughly searched by the killer or killers and the only item taken was a revolver, which ironically was recently pur-

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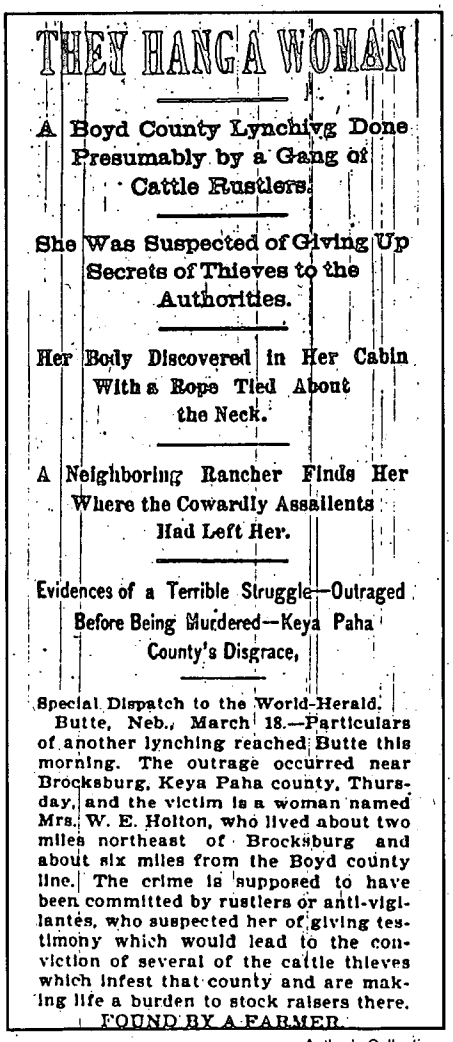
chased by Mrs. Holton for protection. A sum of sixty dollars was later found on Caroline's person, thereby ruling out common robbery.

The following day the body was discovered by William Cowin, a local farmer and neighbor of Mrs. Holton. Cowin found the entire cabin ransacked and, oddly enough, a dog inside that was not Holton's. Cowin then alerted the local authorities, who in turn sent to Springview for the sheriff and coroner. The murdered woman's brother, Willy Fickweiler, was contacted at Dog Ear Lake in South Dakota and he left at once for Brocksburgh. On March 15 word was received from Springview that Coroner A.A. Webster and Sheriff Mel Allen would arrive on the seventeenth. It was decided by Deputy Sheriff Robert Clopton to



THEY HANG A WOMAN

A Boyd County Lynching Done Presumably by a Gang of Cattle Rustlers.

She Was Suspected of Giving Up Secrets of Thieves to the Authorities.

Her Body Discovered in Her Cabin With a Rope Tied About the Neck.

A Neighboring Rancher Finds Her Where the Cowardly Assailents Had Left Her.

Evidences of a Terrible Struggle—Outraged Before Being Murdered—Keya Paha County's Disgrace,

Special Dispatch to the World-Herald.

Butte, Neb., March 18.—Particulars of another lynching reached Butte this morning. The outrage occurred near Brocksburg, Keya Paha county, Thursday, and the victim is a woman named Mrs. W. E. Holton, who lived about two miles northeast of Brocksburg and about six miles from the Boyd county line. The crime is supposed to have been committed by rustlers or anti-vigilantes, who suspected her of giving testimony which would lead to the conviction of several of the cattle thieves which infest that county and are making life a burden to stock raisers there.

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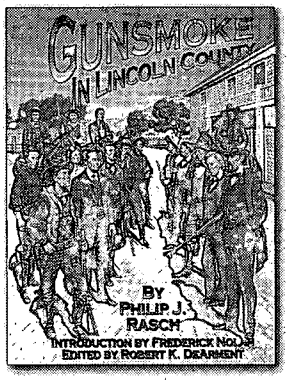

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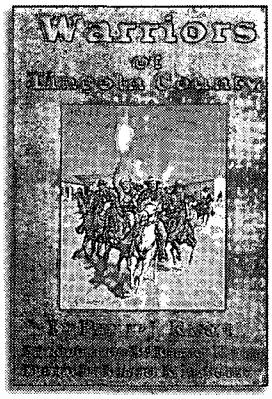

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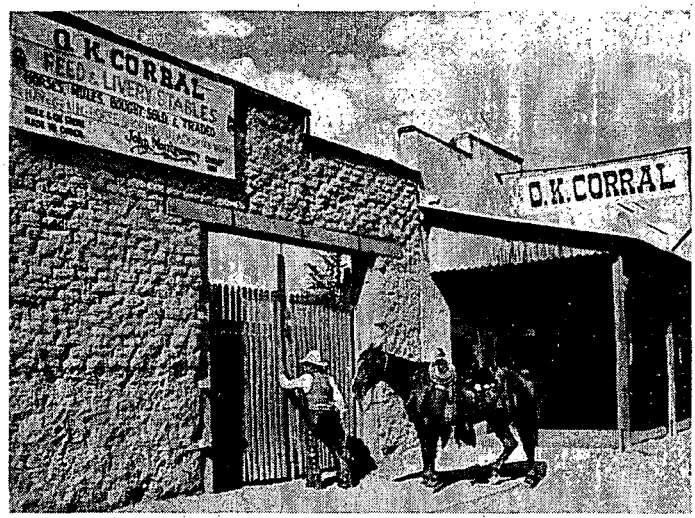

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Nebraska State Historical Society

Keya Paha County attorney Charles E. Lear led the investigation of the Caroline Holton murder.

impanel a jury and hold an inquest into the cause of death. Their finding was that Caroline Holton died as a result of strangulation which was caused by parties unknown placing a rope around her neck and hanging her.

On March 17 county attorney Charles Lear, coroner Webster, and a Dr. Evans of Springview arrived in Brocksburgh to commence the official investigation. Both Doctors Webster and Evans agreed with the previous inquest, with the additional stipulation that Mrs. Holton had not been "outraged" by her attackers as previously believed. Caroline Holton was buried on March 18 at the Oakdale Cemetery in Doty—and so began a more detailed investigation into the murder.

Ex-vigilante Charles E. Lear, now the Keya Paha County attorney, led the probe into the Holton murder and soon focused on two local suspects. Dug Hunt and Miller, first name unknown, were taken to the home of Sam Rhodes by citizens of Brocksburgh under the directions of Lear. Rhodes was justice of the peace in Brocksburgh and a neighbor of Holton's. During the course of the next twenty-four hours both men were questioned, with the focus on Hunt, as it was his dog that was found in the cabin after the murder. Both men admitted no knowledge to the murder, and Lear

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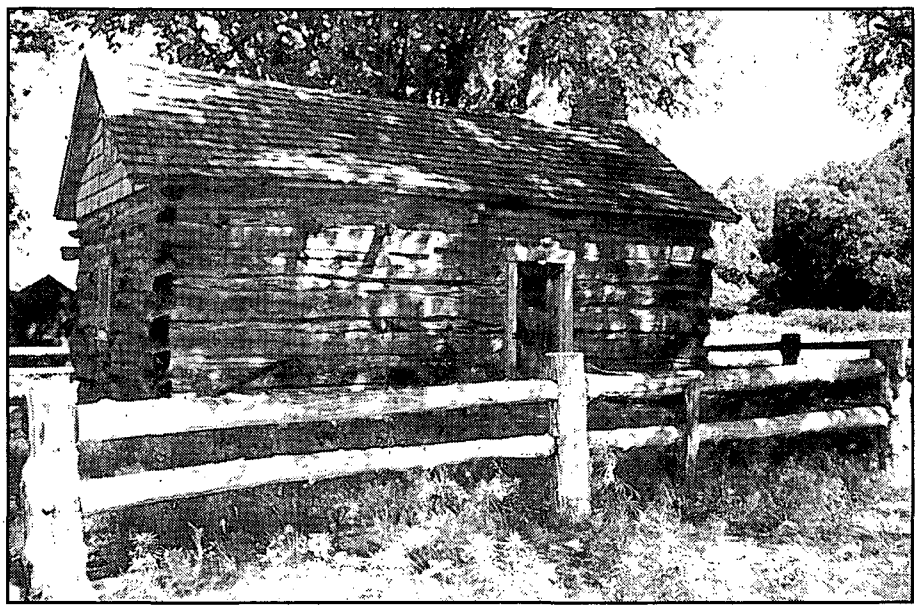
decided to effect a confession by using a well-known vigilance committee ploy. Miller was taken out of the house, followed shortly after by a number of revolver shots. Lear then ran from the house and returned to say that Miller had been killed by the vigilantes and if Hunt would confess, he would protect Hunt from the mob. Hunt was of course in abject fear for his life, but still maintained his innocence. Lear had no choice but to let the two suspects free.

The investigation than focused on Caroline Holton's past. Her husband, Thad Holton, had been committed to a mental institution in Norfolk, Nebraska, some eighteen months previous to the murder. The reason for his being committed is not known. The couple were residents of Keya Paha County from as early as 1885, with Thad originally from New York and Caroline an emigrant from Germany. The Holtons began homesteading on the south side of the Keya Paha River in 1885 and moved north of the river sometime in the 1890s. Caroline was postmistress for Brocksburgh and one of her mail carriers was Mary Shelley, a neighbor. Mrs. Shelley's son, John "Jock" Davis, was charged with attempting to steal two of Caroline Holton's horses on August 14, 1894. Caroline went before Justice of the Peace Sam Rhodes and swore out a complaint the following day against Davis. In the complaint she stated that Jock, upon being caught, threatened Caroline with death if she reported the crime. Justice Rhodes issued an arrest warrant, which was served by Constable G.W. Chamberlain, who turned prisoner Davis over to Sheriff M.M. Allen of Springview, where Jock Davis was jailed. Sometime in the fall, Davis escaped from jail and there seemed to be no effort to recapture him. Davis became the prime suspect in Holton's murder.

Nebraska Governor Silas A. Holcomb directed State Attorney General Arthur S. Churchill to investigate the Holton murder on March 19. Churchill was in Butte, Nebraska, at the time making preparations for the trial of the accused lynchers of Barrett Scott, the defaulting treasurer of Holt County. The attorney general met with County Attorney Lear on April 22, and the two went over the case. Both men came to the conclusion that the murder was brought about to silence Holton and that it was likely committed by Jock Davis. The whereabouts of Davis was not known, and a decision was made to issue a reward for the apprehension of Caroline's murderer. On April



Author's Collection

Caroline and Thad Holton's cabin on the banks of the Keya Paha River. Built circa 1885, renovated in 1995.

In the April issue of *True West*:

Escape from San Quentin, Part II. **By William Secrest.** A new warden and improved facilities do little to stop the largest prison break in California history.

A Tale of Two Franks and a Pistol. **By R.K. DeArment.** Weapons belonging to historical figures are unique and in high demand, but few are as rare as the pistol given to Frank Canton by Frank Wolcott.

Double Hanging in Lincoln. **By Barbara Tucker Peterson.** Robert Casey wasn't expecting anything unusual the day he rode into Lincoln, especially dying at the hands of drifter William Wilson.

Collecting Western Documents. **By Charles M. Robinson, III.** Collecting western paper—letters, diaries, stock certificates, books, maps, etc.—is becoming increasingly popular as more people become interested in the frontier.

True West ***Legends: William Preston "Bill" Longley.*** **By Rick Miller.** Murderer and horsethief "Bloody Bill" Longley cuts a violent path across Texas and Louisiana.

Look for the *True West* April 1999 issue on newsstands March 2, 1999.

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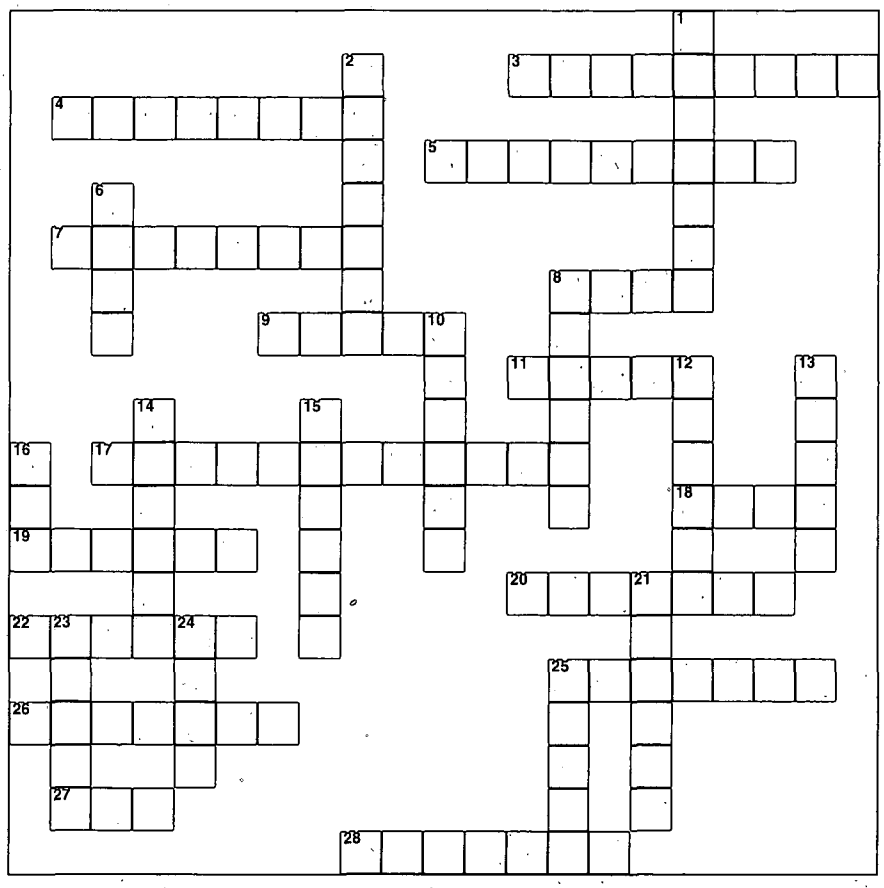
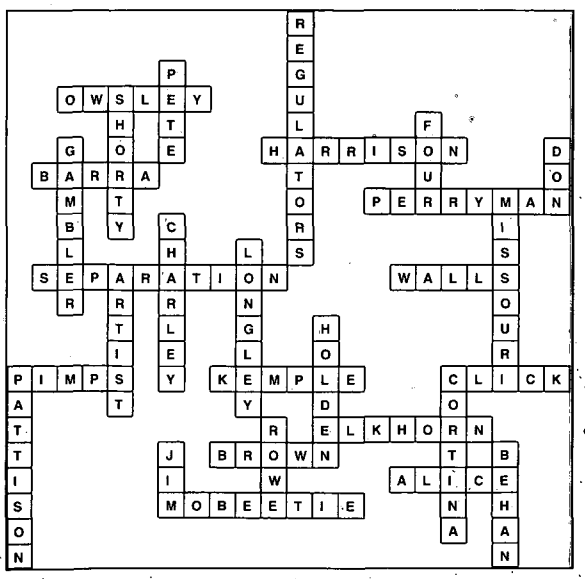


Across

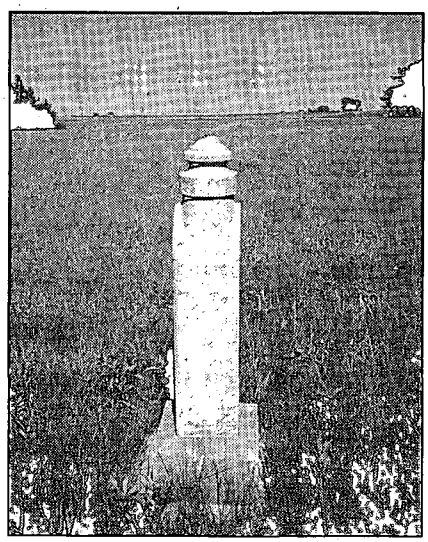
3. Man who purchased *Casa Grande* from Vallejo
4. _____ Adobe, or *Casa Grande*
5. Previous local name of Cozens' property
7. Business John Shanssey preferred
8. Attorney who defended Al Capone
9. John "_____ Jack" Bowen
11. Author of *Trailing Billy the Kid*
17. Name Vallejo preferred to be called
18. Frontier _____ Museum
19. Young Texas Ranger
20. Town where Jim Masterson died
22. Politician partnered with General Mariano Vallejo
25. _____ Zane Cozens
26. Author of *From the Grave*
27. George Lewis "_____" Rickard
28. Sundried jerky

Down

1. Saloon partner with Jim Masterson
2. Town Frontier Times Museum is in
6. Game Shanssey set up for Lottie Deno
8. Town Cozens Ranch is in
10. Guard on the *Wabau*
12. J. Marvin _____
13. Hunter witnessed this man's death
14. _____ Deno
15. Halfway point of All-Alaska race
16. _____ Masterson
21. Woman murdered in Nebraska
23. _____ Allan
24. Keya Paha County attorney
25. Prison brig



Solution to last month's puzzle.



Author's Collection

The grave of "Caroline Holten [sic] died March 13, 1895" at the Oakdale Cemetery, Doty, Nebraska.

27, 1895, the governor issued a statutory reward of $200, which was posted by M.M. Allen, sheriff of Springview. The reward offer disclosed no information about the killing.

The murder of Caroline Holton remains unsolved to this day. Jock Davis was believed to be the killer by law officials at the time and residents of Keya Paha County still believe the same. Davis was said to have moved out of state, thereby avoiding questioning into the crime. On May 14, 1895, attorney Lear filed a *nolle prosequi* in the horse theft charge against Davis because no theft was committed as he was caught before the horses could be taken. This cleared Davis of theft, and he was never charged in the Holton murder. The murder generated sensational headlines in its day and helped to focus attention on the activities of the vigilantes. Although the murder was not the work of vigilantes, this attention brought about the efforts of politicians and citizens to rid the country of their presence. This was achieved in the next few years, helping to bring law and order into the county. The abolishment of the vigilantes remains Caroline Holton's legacy.

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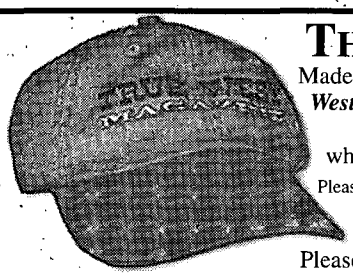

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Barbed Wire Press ..... Cover 3
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Collector's Armoury 8
Columbia House Video 7
Custeriana Books 9
Dixie Gun Works 10
Dodge City Historical 6
Ghosttowns.com 58
Holden Books 52
Knuckleduster Publications 5
Leisure Properties 55
Lincoln County War Books 59
Living History 53
Outlaws and Lawmen Books 57
Pleasant Valley 10
R&A Hobbies 6
Shooting Star Press 11
Slocum Books 6
Terry Johnston's West 11
Tombstone Tumbleweed 60
True West/Old West Alamo tape offer 54
True West T-shirts 1
True West/Old West Subscription 30
Warner Home Video ..... Cover 2
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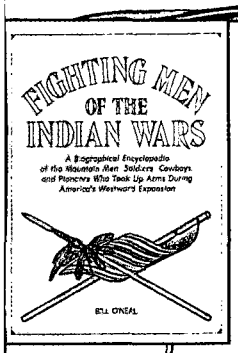

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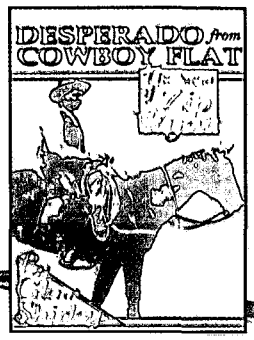

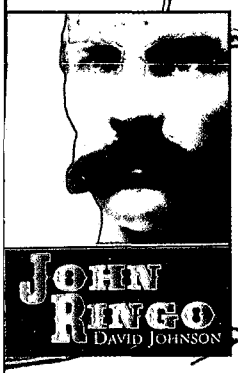

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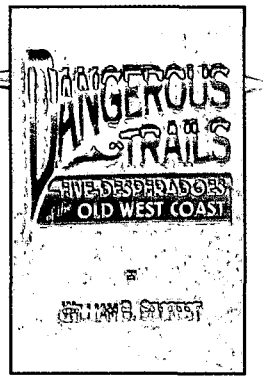

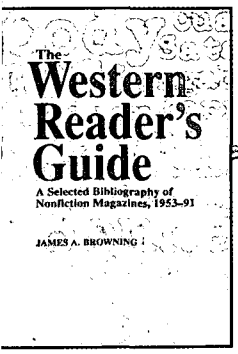

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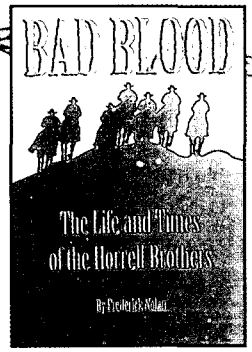

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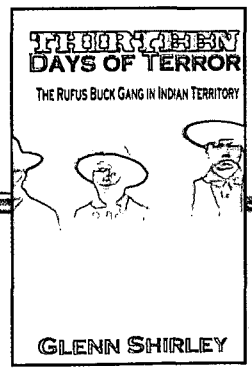

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